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ABSTRACT

Intended for parent and other advocacy groups interested in studying the quality of local public special education programs from a consumer perspective, the packet of information (in looseleaf format) provides an organized way of collecting information, reviewing it, and drawing conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of the local program. The first section contains a review of the history of special education, the role of parents, an introduction to the packet, and suggestions for organizing a local study group. The second section provides guidelines and forms for collecting information about the following: administration and delivery of special education programs, identification and evaluation of students, education related services, transportation, and the educational setting. Collecting information from parents is the focus of the third section with such recommended tools as a discussion guide for parents and teachers, an interview guide for use with parents of students in special education, and checklists for reviewing a child's individualized education program and records. The fourth section gives aids for analyzing the collected information including ways to organize the data and use the assessment checklist for analysis, guidelines for writing the final report, and strategies for effecting change. The final section contains six appendixes including the following: "Suggestions for Conducting Interviews," "Leading Group Activities," and "Examples of Tests That Can Be Used in Whole or in Part by Disabled Children." (DB)

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ASSESSING SPECIAL EDUCATION

A Guide for Parents and Advocates

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EC132569

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SECTION 1

WHY A PARENT/ADVOCATE STUDY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION?

SECTION 1

WHY A PARENT/CONSUMER STUDY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION?

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Parents And The History Of Special Education

Parents have always been an important moving force in providing special programs for their handicapped children. They've fought many battles over the years to counteract massive rejection and neglect. In the past, more often than not, a handicapped child's educational needs were either met in the home or were left unmet. Until recently the commitment to mandatory and free education for all American children fell short of including the disabled — especially the uniquely disabled — child. And so parents were left to represent and provide for this minority as best they could.

Education that meets special needs of the handicapped — special education — is a relatively new function of state and local school systems. The first attempt to meet special needs goes back only to the first half of the 19th century when a few states established separate residential schools for the blind, deaf, and retarded. The students were isolated from their families and the mainstream of life, but some at least were having their educational needs met. Often the "schools" for the retarded were really no more than long-term care facilities.

Local public school programs did not materialize until early in the 20th century. These, where they existed, only minimally provided services — shorter days and school year — and almost never served the severely handicapped. Special education teachers as well as their students often were merely tolerated in the public schools, and where they were present, they were kept apart from the rest of the school enrollment.

By the end of the 1940's states began to mandate special education programs, and colleges and universities began turning out teachers trained in these special fields. This was due in part to influence exerted by parents. By this time families of the handicapped had united into advocacy and political action groups to lobby for programs from state and local sources.

Groups such as local Associations for Retarded Citizens, Easter Seals, and Mental Health Associations often went after funds themselves and provided services directly to their own children. They hired teachers, therapists, evaluators, social workers, and camp counselors to direct programs for the retarded, physically disabled, and emotionally disturbed. Many of these same programs were eventually absorbed into the public school systems in the 70's. In 1963 the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities was formed, and another immense group of parents joined other parents to demand change.

The federal government responded in the 60's by giving financial support to universities for teacher training programs and to state and local school systems for direct services to children. An agency to oversee special education, the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, was created by Congress in 1967. BEH is now known as the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. By the early 70's, the number of handicapped children served in public schools was six times larger than in the mid-40's.

During the past decade parents have turned to legal action in pressing for programs and services. They first had to press, however, for a reaffirmation of two seemingly obvious rights — one national and the other natural. Those were:

1) The right of all exceptional children to have a free public education.
2) The right of the parents to play a role in their children's education, the most important part being consent.

The key case in which these rights were established was the *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens vs. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971).

In another important case, *Mills vs. the Board of Education* (1971), the court ruled a school system could not excuse itself from serving handicapped children by claiming it did not have enough money.

These and other landmark court decisions ultimately led to more state mandatory special education laws and two federal civil rights laws guaranteeing a place for the handicapped in the scheme of society and public education. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects the civil rights of all individuals with handicaps, and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) of 1975 mandates a free appropriate public education for children with special needs.

Parent organizations have had great impact on the entire process of bringing special education to this point. The job of parents, however, is by no means over. Parents are needed to see to it that the guarantees embodied in the laws are implemented. Advocacy groups must continue watchdog efforts.

Parents need to reaffirm their role as *active* partners in the education of their children. The old medical model which encouraged parents to accept their child's limitations as unchangeable must be replaced with a firm belief in the potential for human development inherent in *all* of us.

Attitudes of the professionals are changing due to parent involvement. Professionals are now more inclined to recognize and accept the wide range of feelings parents have, and to agree that parents do indeed have valuable knowledge about their child and a role to play in educational decision-making.

Parents must continue to be involved in the education of their children, by assisting with the practical aspects of their own child's program, and also by overseeing the system as a whole. This will require new ways of thinking and relating by schools and parents alike. Administrators will need to beware of falling into the trap of serving the system to the detriment of the student, who is after all, the crux of the entire concept of an appropriate individualized education. And parents will need to learn to not settle too easily for the path of least resistance.

Introduction

The Task Force on Education for the Handicapped — a group of parents of handicapped children — has developed this packet of materials for other parents and advocacy groups who are interested in the educational rights of handicapped school-aged children.

The main concerns of the group since its founding in 1973 have been to monitor local special education programs and to assist parents in securing an appropriate education for their children, whatever the child's physical, mental, or learning disability.

With the help of other Indiana parents, school districts, and advocacy groups, the information that follows was put on paper in order to assist others with what at first glance may seem to be an enormous task: a consumer study of a local public special education program.

The guide provides an organized way of collecting information, reviewing it, and drawing conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of the local program. For those interested in delving into only one aspect of special education — for example, your group might only wish to study transportation — this guide is designed to allow for separate smaller studies.

It is possible for any group to undertake an assessment study and produce a good useable report, even if the members individually are unfamiliar with the technical language of special education. The value of combined action cannot be over-emphasized. The odds are that a group's combined knowledge about handicapping conditions, advocacy and special educational needs is considerable. What parents especially know has been hard-earned through experiences from daily living, from obtaining medical treatment, and from the never ending search for better services. This wealth of knowledge cannot be underestimated. The data collection tasks have been developed so that they can be independently accomplished by a parent group with at least one good leader.

This consumer guide is made available with the support of the U.S. Office of Education and the U.S. Office of Civil Rights. It has been field-tested by parent/school study groups in six special education districts in Indiana, and refined over the course of a year and a half. The most common results have been the creation of parent advisory boards for special education and improved parent-school communication.

Reasons for A Study

Your group may have a variety of reasons for making a study of your local public special education system.

- You already have an idea about some weaknesses that might be present, perhaps you need to document them in a concrete fashion before you can talk about them.
- Perhaps you want to draw a picture of the system in its entirety so that the community can have input into future planning, change direction, or establish priorities.
- If you are an advisory board constituted by the school system, perhaps your members need to acquire first-hand knowledge and to develop monitoring skills.
- If your group is undertaking parent education programs, the study will help you organize the details of the system for presentation.

Its Value to You

The value of undertaking the study is that:

- It will provide parents with knowledge and skills that will enable them to advocate more fruitfully for their own children's needs.
- It will provide school personnel with evidence that parents really care about the vital work schools perform.
- It will provide school administrators and board members with a knowledgeable group of potential advisors on special education.
- Most specifically, it will provide your group with a written report that can be used to document strengths and weaknesses and encourage change.

Keep in mind that you are undertaking an evaluation from your perspective as a consumer. You are not required to produce professional analytical results. In addition to becoming familiar with the mechanics of special education, it is a picture of the quality of the individual child's school day that should be captured. This will mean a picture of the "educational setting" in its broadest sense.

The prevailing community attitudes about human nurturing and integration, the school's perception of its role as an educational extension of the parent, the rapport among the various segments of the school community, the atmosphere within each school building — all of these are elements only measurable through first-hand witness and from the vantage point of each individual child.

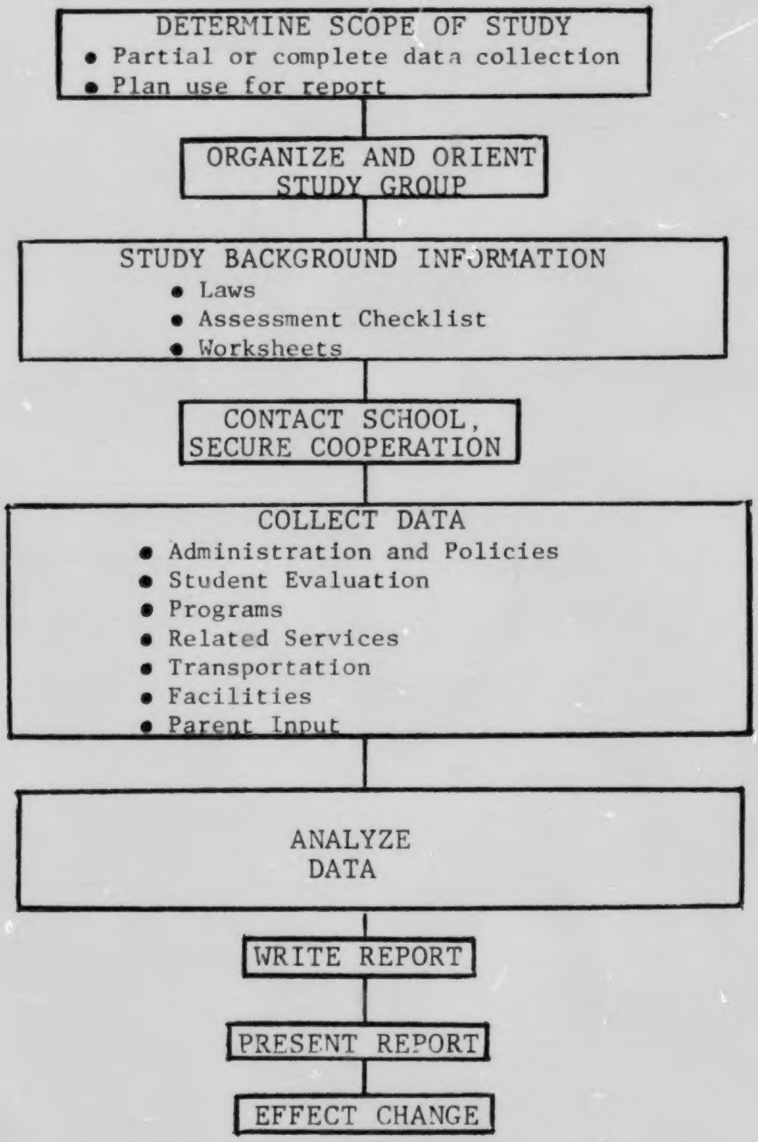
The Guide for Parents and Advocates will help you organize thoughts, compare information, draw conclusions, and write a comprehensive report. You will need to add to it the ability to communicate effectively and to adapt the materials to your situation as needed. Although developed in Indiana, most elements of the Guide can easily be adapted by almost any group in any geographic location nationwide. Terminology for various elements of the IEP process may, for example, have to be changed. However, much of the content has the universality afforded by the language of the federal regulations.

A Word to School Personnel

As a staff member of a state or local education agency, you might find the Guide for Parents and Advocates valuable for several reasons. The parent perspective inherent in these materials might serve as a model upon which to build or refine the parent input component of your own program evaluation procedures. The Task Force hopes that it will lead you to encourage more active parental involvement so that school and parent alike are acknowledged as partners in the education of children.

How To Organize A Local Study Group

The following diagram will give you an idea of the steps necessary in undertaking a complete or partial assessment study.


DETERMINE SCOPE OF STUDY
• Partial or complete data collection
• Plan use for report
ORGANIZE AND ORIENT STUDY GROUP
STUDY BACKGROUND INFORMATION
• Laws
• Assessment Checklist
• Worksheets
CONTACT SCHOOL, SECURE COOPERATION
COLLECT DATA
• Administration and Policies
• Student Evaluation
• Programs
• Related Services
• Transportation
• Facilities
• Parent Input
ANALYZE DATA
WRITE REPORT
PRESENT REPORT
EFFECT CHANGE

MANPOWER

Core Team of 6: Ideally, 4 parents of handicapped school-aged children, 1 special education administrator, and 1 other individual, such as a school board member, regular education teacher, etc.

Facilitator: One team member should agree to act as facilitator of the entire study.

Optional: 2-10 recruited helpers to disseminate Parent Interview forms and visit schools.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

1 copy, ASSESSING SPECIAL EDUCATION, A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND ADVOCATES*
Access to zerox machine and typewriter
1-2 reams of duplication paper

Optional: envelopes, postage

GENERAL RESOURCE MATERIALS

PL 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Regulations)
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Regulations)
Your state's special education regulations
Your state's Annual Plan for Special Education (submitted each year to federal government)
94-142 and 504: A Guide for Parents and Advocates by Children's Defense Fund, 1520 New Hampshire Avenue, Washington, DC 20036 ($1.25)

Ask for copies of federal regulations from either the State Department of Education or one of two federal offices.

For PL 94-142, contact the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services

For Section 504, contact the Office of Civil Rights

Both at this address: 400 Maryland Avenue S.W.
Washington, DC 20202

Keep in mind that regulations are written after a law has been passed and are more detailed in information for the purposes of study. Ask for copies of the regulations.

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Closer Look, the national information center for the handicapped, will also be able to provide you with information about your state's special education program. Contact Closer Look, 1201 16th Street NW Washington, DC 20036

SUGGESTED TASK ASSIGNMENTS

Using the Assignment Sheet (see next page), the facilitator may choose to assign the data collection tasks as follows.

All Team Members:	Review all materials.
Team Member 1:	Document Collection Meet with the Director of Special Education
Team Member 2:	Student Evaluation Related Services
Team Member 3:	Transportation
Team Member 4:	Visit the schools
Team Member 5:	Group discussion
Team Member 6:	Data from parents

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT SHEET

TEAM MEMBER	TASK
ALL TEAM MEMBERS	REVIEW MATERIALS

Become familiar with this guide, its ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST, PL 94-142, Section 504, and the state special education regulations.

TEAM MEMBER 1: ______________________ DOCUMENT COLLECTION
MEET WITH DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Phone: ______________________

Collect written school documents, using the CHECKLIST OF INFORMATION SOURCES. Share materials with Team. Make arrangements for school meetings. Interview Director using INTERVIEW: DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION.

TEAM MEMBER 2: ______________________ STUDENT EVALUATION
RELATED SERVICES

Phone: ______________________

Arrange interview(s) regarding school testing services using INTERVIEW: STUDENT EVALUATION. Identify individuals responsible for the various education-related services. Interview each using WORKSHEET 1: EDUCATION-RELATED SERVICES.

TEAM MEMBER 3: ______________________ TRANSPORTATION

Phone: ______________________

Determine extent of transportation study. Simple study: conduct interview using INTERVIEW: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSPORTATION. Complex study: recruit volunteers, undertake a survey using WORKSHEET 2: TRANSPORTATION SURVEY. Tabulate results and summarize.

TEAM MEMBER 4: ______________________ VISIT THE SCHOOLS

Phone: ______________________

Determine number of schools to be visited. Recruit volunteers. Make prearranged visits using WORKSHEET 3: BUILDING VISIT/PROGRAM INFORMATION AND WORKSHEET 4: BUILDING VISIT/PHYSICAL FACILITIES.

TEAM MEMBER 5: ______________________ GROUP DISCUSSION

Phone: ______________________

Schedule a group discussion meeting, inviting parents, teachers, and others. Select discussion leaders and recorders for each small discussion group. Use DISCUSSION GUIDE. Summarize information.

TEAM MEMBER 6: ______________________ DATA FROM PARENTS

Phone ______________________

Determine number of parents to be contacted and manner of contact (discussion group, through school, etc.). Recruit volunteers. Have parents fill out and return INTERVIEW: PARENT, WORKSHEET 5: CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING YOUR CHILD'S IEP, and WORKSHEET 6: CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING YOUR CHILD'S RECORDS. Tabulate results and summarize information.

NOTE

A study of special education budgeting and school finance has not been included in this assessment guide. It is a large complex study which should be undertaken separately. Your group may want to make budget your second stage of consumer monitoring. An excellent source of guidance for this is The School Budget: It's Your Money; It's Your Business by Rhoda E. Dersh, National Committee for Citizens in Education, Suite 410, Wilde Lake, Village Green, Columbia, MD 21044, 1979 ($4.95). Included is background information about school budgets and specific suggestions for materials to collect techniques for analysis, and citizen strategies for change.

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COLLECTING INFORMATION FROM THE SCHOOL

SECTION 2

COLLECTING INFORMATION FROM THE SCHOOL

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Administration And Delivery Of Special Education Programs

A review of the administrative structure, policies, and procedures of the school district's special education program will give parents an idea of the general philosophy that exists regarding special education. It might also help indicate areas where more detailed information would be useful.

The school district should have established policies and procedures which are clearly set forth and useful to both employees of the school district in their role in assisting students, and to parents in their efforts to secure adequate schooling for their children. Well-designed policies and procedures will assist, rather than impede, efforts to deliver appropriate education to handicapped children.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

There are several ways in which the special education component of a school district can be organized. The density of your area's population and the local incidences of various handicapping conditions both help determine how the delivery of services is organized.

For purposes of comparison, the national prevalence rates for each handicapping condition is listed below, along with the total percentage of school-aged population expected or actually falling under the designation of handicapped.

The first column is a set of predicted rates developed at the Airlie House Conference in 1973. The second column is the set of actual rates derived from the 1977-78 child count taken under PL 94-142 and PL 89-313.

	Predicted (%)	Actual (%) (1977-78)
Mentally Retarded	3.00	1.84
Hard of Hearing	0.50	0.17
Deaf	0.07	*
Speech Impaired	3.50	2.39
Visually Handicapped	0.22	0.07
Emotionally Disturbed	2.00	0.56
Orthopedically Impaired	0.50	0.17
Other Health Impaired	*	0.27
Learning Disabled	2.50	1.89
TOTAL	12.29%	7.36%

*This category is included in the one above.

Depending upon the services that need to be provided, the expense of offering such services, and the availability of qualified teachers and specialists, a district may choose to do one of two things. It may offer all educational services as part of the existing system of delivery, or the district may join with other nearby school districts to offer combined services.

A school district's organizational structure for special education will most probably be a version of a single or a cooperative unit.

Single District. Here, the school district provides educational services to all children within its boundaries, including the entire range of programs and services for handicapped students. Single district organization for special education program delivery is most common and workable in high population areas.

Cooperative District. Two or more school districts join to provide special educational services to all handicapped children within their combined boundaries. This may be arranged informally or by means of a joint legal agreement. A single administrative office may be created and teaching personnel hired, or a policy-making governing board may be established to coordinate the special educational efforts of individual districts. Member districts are usually adjoining or within the same county or region.

However the organization is structured, it should be able to effectively deliver special education services. One individual should be primarily responsible for the coordination of all elementary and secondary programs and related services. In most states, the individual heading up special education programs must have the credentials and certification in special education administration.

The person's title may be director of special education, special education coordinator, assistant superintendent, or director of pupil services. Working with the director are other staff persons in charge of specialized segments of special education programming, such as supervisors for elementary or secondary programs, psychometrists, or coordinators for programs of specific disability areas like mental retardation, learning disabilities, or speech and hearing. The school district should be able to supply you with an organization chart of the school district. Ask for specific names and job descriptions of persons in special education.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL COOPERATION

While it is desirable to have a distinguishable office with clear responsibility for special education, all other departments of the school system should also understand their role in the education of the handicapped. Those responsible for transportation, testing, counseling, student employment, in-service training, athletics, recreation, art, music, physical education, and any other general educational service should be part of the cooperative effort. The special education department should have, in addition, equal access to program and administrative decision-making.

In-service training for all principals, regular education teachers, and even secretarial staff should be offered regarding referral procedures for students with suspected needs and clear written policies distributed to all.

It is also desirable for school administrators to have a good working relationship with the various service providers and advocacy agencies that locally serve the handicapped.

FINANCING SPECIAL EDUCATION

Educating a handicapped student is expensive. The need for smaller classes, aides, therapists, special transportation, and other resources increases the cost considerably.

In order to meet money needs a local school district's special education program is dependent upon funds from three, possibly four sources: the local tax base, the state, federal monies, and special grants.

Local Tax Base. The majority of revenue from local sources is generated from local property taxes. (The property tax is also used as a measure of fiscal ability when the state distributes its funds for education. See following page.) Other likely local sources of tax money are auto excise taxes, optional county or city gross income taxes, and supplemental school taxes.

State Sources. State school revenue comes from taxes on sales and use, gross income, corporation profits, fuel, cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, inheritance, and insurance. Since the state generally subsidizes the additional costs of special education, most special education finance policies originate at the state level.

To offset these extra costs, states have established formulas for supplementing local funds for special education programs. Most states use one of six general formulas.*

1. UNIT FINANCING. Under this formula, school districts are reimbursed by the state for each special education class or unit (this includes the cost of the teacher, administration, and transportation). Some states, however, put a ceiling on the amount of annual growth that can occur in special education programs, and this may limit the number of new classes that can be approved each year. In addition, a school district may tend to increase the size of special education classes because the state will reimburse only for a given number of teachers and not for the number of students enrolled.

Since the classes are often based on the number of children in the average daily attendance (ADA) of the school (the average number of students attending school during the year), many small school districts are unable to qualify for units. For example, if the state reimburses the school district for 20 special education units for every 3,000 pupils in their ADA, school districts with less than 3,000 ADA will not be able to qualify.

Another problem with this type of financing is that it causes some children to be placed in classes that don't suit their needs because some programs are less expensive to operate than others.

2. PERCENTAGE REIMBURSEMENT. Using this formula, school districts are reimbursed for a partial or full percentage of all costs incurred in providing education for handicapped children. When the state provides 100 percent of the excess cost to school districts, this type of reimbursement is adequate. However, if the percentage used is less, a local school district may be tempted to place a child in a program which is less expensive.

3. WEIGHTED FORMULA SYSTEM. Using a weighted formula system, the state first determines what the average cost of educating a non-handicapped child is. This amount is then multiplied by a

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*This information on the state special education financing is adapted almost wholly from Book I, "The Parent/Professional Partnership: The Right to Education," National Association for Retarded Citizens (NARC Research and Demonstration Institute), 1977 that was based on a study done by Sister Marie Angele Thomas. Exceptional Child, May 1973.

factor that is based on the additional amount of money it takes to educate a child with a certain disability. For example, if it is determined that it costs 2.73 times as much to educate a multiply handicapped child as it does to educate a non-handicapped pupil, the local school district will receive 2.73 times the regular cost per pupil.

Although this system is better than the unit financing method, it still has some major drawbacks. If the multiplier is based on the average cost per pupil statewide, districts which have higher educational costs will not receive an equitable amount of reimbursement. In addition, it may discourage some from beginning programs for children whose handicaps require more expensive programs.

4. REIMBURSEMENT FOR PERSONNEL. Here, school districts are reimbursed for the cost of hiring professional personnel needed to serve handicapped children. If this method is employed by a state, and no similar type of reimbursement is given for staff who work with non-handicapped children, a school district might be tempted to place children in special education classes who don't belong there. They may also make these classes larger to decrease the cost per pupil. Another weakness in this formula is that teachers are not the only added expense in the education of the handicapped. There are other necessary resources to pay for such as supplies, equipment, and transportation.

5. STRAIGHT SUM REIMBURSEMENT. School districts are given a set sum of money to educate each handicapped child in their district. This may encourage the school district to label children and place them in special education programs when it may be better for them to be mainstreamed.

This system also tends to encourage school districts to increase the size of special education classes because it is to their advantage to put all of the students in fewer classrooms and hire fewer teachers.

6. EXCESS COST FORMULA. The school district subtracts the cost of educating a non-handicapped child from the cost of educating a handicapped child. The state reimburses the school district for the excess cost. This formula encourages school districts to place a child in the most appropriate setting if it is fully refunded for the excess costs. This is because an appropriate placement will not cost any more than an inappropriate one. However, if the state does not fully reimburse the school district for the excess cost, a district might be tempted to place children in less expensive programs.

Federal Sources. In addition to the money coming directly from the state treasury, a state agency can now receive and disperse funds to help local school districts cover the extra costs of educating students under the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142). This federal law authorizes a gradually increasing percentage of the excess cost of educating handicapped children to be paid for by the federal government. The amount should gradually increase until 1982, when the level of aid will be at the maximum figure of 40 percent.

PL-94-142 requires each state education agency to pass along federal monies to the local school districts. In the first year of the formula system, 50 percent of the monies going to the states was passed to the local school district. For 1979, and thereafter, 75 percent of the total allocation will have gone to the local district to provide direct educational and support services.

In order to qualify for federal funds, a local district submits an LEA (local education agency) application every year. In it, the school district describes its plan for the use of the money. The money is to be used for additional or new special education programming. It cannot be used to supplant whatever funds are currently spent on special education. In the LEA application, the district also gives assurances that appropriate services are being provided.

The state education agency can refuse to pass federal monies along to a local district if the district does not conform to the Annual Program Plan turned in each year to the U.S. Office of Education by the state special education department.

Special Grants. Money for special educational purposes is also available on a grant basis to local school districts from a variety of sources. Private foundations and public agencies (both state and federal) offer funds to those willing to develop or test pilot programs for such things as adaptive physical education, unique teaching methods, educational materials, staff development, training (of teachers and parents), and school support services. In addition, universities and service agencies such as the Mental Health Center often have developed experimental programs and services that are available to school districts willing to become involved.

PROGRAM PLANNING

The local school district should plan its special education programming using four points of reference:

1) The state's Special Education Regulations which will reflect PL 94-142 and Section 504.
2) The Annual State Plan in which the state gives assurances of full service to all handicapped children within a specified timeline.

3) Input received from the district's staff, advisory groups, school board, citizen and advocacy groups, and parents.

4) The current status of the local program, including gaps in service, personnel needs, budget realities, physical facilities, etc.

Much of this will be reflected in the LEA application, which describes the district's projected goals and planned use of its special education monies. The LEA applications for the past, current, and coming year are valuable study tools. They show where emphasis is placed and are useful to compare to the current year's practices.

PERSONNEL

In order to provide an adequate special education program, the school district should have personnel procedures that insure nondiscriminatory hiring practices, attract qualified persons, and encourage professional development through in-service training and participation in professional activities.

Teachers of special education students should meet the minimal certification requirements of the state. Teachers should be able to demonstrate that they have (1) a basic knowledge and understanding of the handicapping condition with which they will deal, (2) know a variety of teaching methods, and (3) have attitudes toward the handicapped that reflect a belief that the purpose of education for the handicapped is growth, not sheltering.

Regular education teachers should have additional training regarding the integration of handicapped children into regular education facilities. The success of in-service efforts depends both on the mechanics of how it is done and the attitudes of the people involved.

EVALUATION

The local school district should have methods of evaluating its staff programs and progress.

Evaluation can come at different levels. Some might be:

- State Program Review. The state department of education makes periodic (usually every two or three years) monitoring visits to each local special education district. The report resulting from this outlines the district's compliance or lack of compliance with state regulations.

- In-House Program Review. The local district undertakes its own study of its policies, procedures and effectiveness.
- Staff Evaluation. Teaching, support and administrative staff are regularly evaluated in terms of their performance.
- Evaluation by Consumers. Formal and informal evaluative comments can come from school advisory boards, school board study teams, parents, and local agencies.

PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR PARENTS

Procedural safeguards have been written into special education regulations to insure that decisions regarding the education of a handicapped child are made in a fair manner. Each local school district should have policies that spell out in writing and action the extent to which it safeguards individual and family educational rights.

Specific safeguards include:

- Notification before actions by the school are taken.
- Inclusion of parents when planning a child's program.
- Confidentiality of and free access to school records.
- Steps that can be taken if parent and school disagree.

Notification. The school district should be able to show by its forms and records that parents are duly notified before any action is taken to:

1) Identify a child or label him or her as handicapped or a special education student.
2) Give the child diagnostic or evaluative tests of any kind.
3) Discuss a child's school program.
4) Place a child in any special education program.

Parents should receive at one or more points either a written or verbal (or both if necessary) statement of all the rights and safeguards guaranteed them. Local school districts are usually required by the state to show proof that such rights notices have in fact been given. Records of your child's IEP (Individual Education Program) meeting will often show where parents have signed a statement showing that they have been given a copy of their rights.

In whatever form it is done — handbooks, lists, verbal explanation, sign language — such statements of parental rights should be communicated in a clear form that can be easily understood by anyone. The school may generate a great deal of paperwork, but if it is not written in a readable format, or if an attempt is only made once in the midst of mounds of other paperwork, it is useless. The effort of the school district to communicate with parents cannot be evaluated solely on the quantity or packaging of written materials, but must also be evaluated based upon the intent to communicate clearly. *Ask your school district for a copy of its handout describing parent and student rights in special education.*

Parent Participation. Parents should also be invited and encouraged to attend the meetings that are held to write or review each child's IEP. At these meetings the parents can request that any services they feel would benefit their child be included in the IEP. Often parents allow their feelings of gratitude for any programming for their children or their feelings of inadequacy to inhibit them from participating effectively in IEP meetings. School personnel need to be sensitive to this and to accept parents at whatever level of involvement they wish to have. Some parents are not interested. Others are content to simply understand what is going on and want only to be informed. Still others feel they need to share what they know about their child to help the school design a good program. And a few want equal involvement in the total design of objectives, goals, and teaching techniques.

No matter at what level a parent operates, training in the educational process and encouragement from the school are necessary to make their participation effective. *Find out if there are any parent education programs available in your school district.*

Access to Records and Confidentiality. The school is also required to allow the parents easy and automatic access to their children's records. Parents have access not only to all the records, but also should be able to discuss the records with school employees if explanations are necessary. Knowledge of the contents of the child's evaluation records allows the parents to have a better understanding of the child's needs, as well as giving them an even broader basis for input into the education planning for their child.

The confidentiality of a child's educational records is important, but it should not be used to exclude parents from access. All school employees should be informed of the proper use of education records and the importance of maintaining confidentiality and providing parental access. Both school personnel and parents need to be aware that possibly detrimental descriptions of a child are not to be included in records. If, in reviewing their child's education records, parents find information which they feel is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the child's rights, they can ask the school to amend the record.

If the school provides you with copies of the records, they may charge a reasonable amount for the cost of copying. No other charge for access can be demanded, however. *A written policy regarding records and evidence of parent notification of their rights should have been put in place in the late 1960's with the Family Educational and Privacy Act. Ask for a copy.*

Due Process Steps. If the school and parents cannot agree on an action regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of a special education student, or if confidentiality or access rights are in question, steps may be taken to resolve it at the state level.

In some states, there may be a mediation or formal complaint procedure parents may use to find a solution.

A parent may exhaust these steps or call directly for a hearing before an impartial hearing officer who has been appointed by the state.

The number of complaints filed and hearings called can be a good indication of trouble spots within a school district, or the willingness of school personnel to negotiate. *Information about complaints and hearings can be secured from either the local or state education agencies.*

See ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST in Section 4 for specific points for comparison.

ASSESSMENT AREA I: ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ASSESSMENT AREA VI: PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR THE STUDENT AND PARENT

Interview: Director Of Special Education

Ask for an appointment to meet with the director of your local district's department of special education. Tell him or her that the purpose of this meeting will be to explain your parent study of local special education, to enlist his support in the project, to collect some public documents for your team's use, and to leave with him or her an interview form to fill out. Use the Checklist of Information Sources and the Interview: Director of Special Education form for this meeting.

In dealing with special education administrators, a good place to begin is to get them to agree that one of the school's jobs is to provide parents with the information they need to make informed joint decisions. Then, with a mutual understanding of the value of information-sharing having been established, you and he or she can proceed in a positive vein.

Before getting down to particular questions, give the director a brief overall picture of the purpose of your group's assessment study. Present yourself and the project as openly and confidently as possible: who you are, why you're there, what you hope to accomplish.

Some of the points about the study project you might want to make are the following:

1) Your group is assembling a report on local education services from its perspective as consumers or parents.
2) Your group has identified a specific problem, and needs to assemble facts before making recommendations to the school district for dealing with it.
3) Your group expects to be involved in future educational planning for the district's handicapped population of handicapped students.

The persons you interview will need to see that the time he or she spends with you is important and worthwhile. Make clear that the purpose of the interview is to gather information that will be combined with the information from other sources, in order to develop as complete and accurate a picture as possible. Reassure school persons and parents that the interview is not meant to evaluate them personally.

Completing the interview form will take about two hours of the director's time. Ask for the form to be returned to you and for an appointment to meet for about an hour and a half to discuss his or her answers. See Appendix A for additional ideas on conducting interviews.

For analysis, compare sections I through VI of the Interview form for the director of special education (which may be separated) with the six assessment areas of the ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST in Section 4 of this guide.

Checklist Of Information Sources

Citizens have access to the policies and documents of legal and state public school systems. Personally identifiable information and the confidential records of individual students are, however, excluded from public view.

Listed below are suggested sources from which useful data about your local special education district can be derived. Not all policies and procedures will be in written form. Most documents can be acquired from the Director of Special Education or the Office of the Superintendent.

ASSESSMENT AREA I: ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

—— Description of the special education district

—— Joint agreement with other school districts, if any

—— Personnel roster

—— Application for Assistance under PL 94-142 (LEA Application):
—— Previous year
—— Current year

—— Your district's most recent Program Audit Report (compiled by state review team on the quality of the local special education program)

—— List of non-school service providers and contractors

—— Descriptions of advisory boards, including membership

—— Current budget for special education

—— List of all sources of income (including grants)

—— Optional: State application forms for funds

—— Manual of staff procedures

—— Staff evaluation policies and forms

—— Optional: Employment policies

—— Policy Handbook (see following sections for specific types of policy statements)

ASSESSMENT AREA II: IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Written policies on:

—— Childfind
—— Screening
—— Referral
—— Evaluation

—— List of non-school evaluation sources

—— List of tests used

Sample forms used for:

—— Referral
—— Evaluation
—— Parent notification and consent

ASSESSMENT AREA III: INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Written policies on:

—— IEP
—— IEP meetings
—— Annual case reviews

Sample forms used for:

—— IEP
—— Annual case review
—— Parent notification and consent
—— IEP meeting summary report

ASSESSMENT AREA IV: PLACEMENT INTO EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RELATED SERVICES

—— Written description of each program

—— Written description of short-term or innovative projects

—— Written description of related services available

—— List of outside sources available or used for education related services

ASSESSMENT AREA V: EDUCATIONAL SETTING

—— Map of district

—— List of all school buildings

—— Plans for new construction or modification of buildings

—— Optional: Floor plans of each building

ASSESSMENT AREA VI: PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR THE STUDENT AND PARENT

—— Written policy on complaint procedures, mediation, or hearings

—— Notification to parent of rights (or Parent Handbook)

Written policies on:

—— Surrogate Parent
—— Administration of medication
—— Records and confidentiality

—— Description of parent education programs

—— List of local services available to parents

—— Forms for records access

—— List of types and location of records

Interview: Director Of Special Education

Name and Position ____

Special Education District ______________________________ Date __________

AREA I: ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. In what way has your local school district organized its special education programs and services?

—— As one department of a single school district
—— As a cooperative effort with other districts
—— Other

Please explain:

2. Describe the special education administrative and supervisory staff.

Title	Number	Responsibility

3. To whom is the director of special education responsible?

4. Is there a school board and/or special education board ultimately responsible? Describe.

5. Does the special education department have primary responsibility for administering any of the following activities?

—— Special education transportation
—— Testing and evaluation
—— Guidance and counseling
—— Special education budget-finance
—— Specialties such as art, music, physical education, etc.

—— Other ____
—— None

NOTE: To collect information on transportation, use "INTERVIEW: SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSPORTATION.

6. How many children are served by this school district this year?

—— Total local school population
—— Total number of students enrolled in special education

7. How many students in the following areas of exceptionality are provided educational programs in your district schools or elsewhere? Check all levels that apply.

Number		Infant	Preschool	Kindergarten	Primary	Intermediate	Middle/Junior	Secondary
____	Communication handicapped							
____	Emotionally disturbed							
____	Hearing impaired, deaf							
____	Multiply handicapped							
____	Mildly mentally handicapped							
____	Moderately mentally handicapped							
____	Severely mentally handicapped							
____	Physically handicapped							
____	Learning disabled							
____	Visually impaired, blind							
____	Homebound, all disability areas							
Total								

8. How many of these students receive an educational program in a location other than your local schools? For example, through tuition transfers, at state schools, from non-school agencies.

Number	Exceptionality	Level	Provider of Programs

9. Are any programs or services provided to children not enrolled in public school? For example, preschool or private school handicapped students. Check all that apply and specify.

—— Identification
—— Evaluation
—— Special education programs ____________________
—— Related services ____________________
—— Other ____________________

10. Does your district contract for any educational or education-related services from non-school sources? If yes, which and from whom?

Service	Contractor or Provider

11. Do you have written policies and procedures in the following areas?

—— Referral Evaluation
—— IEP Placement
—— Parent Rights
—— Medication
—— Discipline Code
—— Due Process Procedures
—— Surrogate Parent
—— Confidentiality and Records
—— Personnel

12. Where, in your opinion, does special education fall in terms of your school district's funding priorities?

—— High priority —— Middle priority —— Low priority

13. What are the sources of funding for special education programs?

Local:

State:

Grants, etc.:

14. What is this state's formula for supplementing local funds for special education?

—— Unit Financing
—— Percentage Reimbursement
—— Weighted Formula
—— Reimbursement for Personnel
—— Straight Sum Reimbursement
—— Excess Cost

15. What is the role of the following in preparing the school budget?

Director of Special Education:

Office of School Budget Finance:

Superintendent:

School Board of Special Education Board:

Parent/consumers:

Who above makes the final decision about the special education budget? Underline.

16. In which month is the budget presented to the school board?

17. Have any special education programs been denied or cut in the past year due to lack of funding? If yes, explain.

18. Does your district actively seek special education funds from sources other than the state and local governments? For example, federal "seed" money, grants, etc. If yes, specify.

19. How is public and parental involvement in special education encouraged by your district?

Family interest in an individual child:

Public interest in local programs and issues:

20. Does your school system have an officially designated parent/community advisory group? If yes, describe its membership and role.

21. Have any of the following types of evaluations of your special education programs taken place? Check all that apply.

—— By special education administrators
—— By school administrators outside the department of special education
—— By the state education division
—— By a local citizen group
—— Other ______________________________
—— None

22. Are there written job descriptions for the supervisory staff of your special education department?

23. In what ways is information about special education shared with all school staff? Check all that apply.

—— A handbook on special education
—— Required in-service training for all
—— Optional in-service training for all
—— Informal sharing of information between trained principals or other administrators and all staff
—— Very little

24. How are special education professionals encouraged to remain current and update their knowledge and skills?

—— Special in-service courses
—— Release time to attend professional meetings
—— Reimbursement for the expenses of meetings, classes, etc.
—— Other ____

25. What, in your opinion, are the current in-service needs of all school staff — both regular and special education?

Category of Staff Person	In-service Need

26. How many special education teachers, specialists, and aides are employed to serve special education students in your district? Indicate the number per grade level. Mark a "P" beside any that are part-time.

	COMMUNICATION HANDICAPPED						EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED						HEARING IMPAIRED, DEAF						MULTIPLY HANDICAPPED						MILDLY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED					
	Inf/Pr-S	Kinder	Primary	Int'med	Mdl/Jr	Secondary	Inf/Pr-S	Kinder	Primary	Int'med	Mdl/Jr	Secondary	Inf/Pr-S	Kinder	Primary	Int'med	Mdl/Jr	Secondary	Inf/Pr-S	Kinder	Primary	Int'med	Mdl/Jr	Secondary	Inf/Pr-S	Kinder	Primary	Int'med	Mdl/Jr	Secondary
CERTIFIED TEACHERS																														
SPECIALISTS (specify)																														
AIDES																														

	MODERATELY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED						SEVERELY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED						PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED						LEARNING DISABLED						VISUALLY IMPAIRED, BLIND					
CERTIFIED TEACHERS																														
SPECIALISTS (specify)																														
AIDES																														

27. How are aides used for special education in your school district?

—— As tutors
—— In restrooms
—— In occupational therapy
—— In physical therapy
—— In resource rooms
—— On buses and other vehicles
—— For assistance in movement within the building
—— Other ______________________________

28. Is training provided to aides? How and when?

29. Are any of the following support persons available to regular classroom teachers who have special education students in their classes? Check all that apply.

—— Classroom aide
—— Psychologist
—— Nurse
—— Social worker
—— Learning disabilities specialist
—— Other consultants ____
____

INTERVIEW: DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

AREA II: IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

1. What procedures are used to locate children who are either handicapped or suspected of having a handicapping condition?

   Child find:

   Screening programs:

   Other:

2. Who is responsible for processing evaluation requests and contacting parents?

3. Who makes up the typical evaluation team?

School personnel	Non-school personnel

4. In what ways are parents routinely involved in the evaluation process? Check all that apply.

   —— Parents are invited to preevaluation meetings, at the time a referral is made.
   —— Parents are asked to give written consent for evaluation.
   —— Parents fill out a family and medical history form on child.
   —— Parents are invited to a post-evaluation meeting to explain test results (prior to IEP meeting).
   —— Parents share their observations and knowledge of child at IEP meetings.

5. Does the district make and pay for outside referrals for evaluation?

6. Which areas of exceptionality is your staff least able to evaluate thoroughly?

   ____ Communication handicapped
   ____ Seriously emotionally disturbed
   ____ Hearing impaired, deaf
   ____ Multiply handicapped
   ____ Educable mentally retarded
   ____ Trainable mentally retarded
   ____ Severely mentally retarded
   ____ Physically handicapped
   ____ Learning disabled
   ____ Visually impaired, blind

7. What is your policy when the evaluation results do not point to a specific disability, but the student could profit from special educational programs?

NOTE: For more information on student evaluation, use "INTERVIEW: STUDENT EVALUATION"

INTERVIEW: DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

AREA III: THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

1. Has training been given to any of the following school personnel on the IEP process? Check all that apply.

—— Regular education teachers
—— Special education teachers
—— Other ____________________
—— Principals
—— Evaluation staff

2. How are parents informed of their role in the IEP process?

—— In person before the IEP meeting
—— At the time of the IEP meeting
—— At a training meeting sponsored by the school, PTO, etc.
—— In the form of a written hand-out

3. Does your school district routinely give parents a copy of the IEP? If not, how may it be obtained?

4. How are parents informed of their child's progress?

Written notice:

Meetings:

5. Is an IEP meeting convened for every student on whom you have conducted an evaluation?

6. Are IEP meetings currently convened within your state's timelines? Time is counted from the date a child is referred for evaluation. If no, at what point/s does the process seem to be delayed?

7. Who is responsible for:

Scheduling the IEP meeting?

Making a written report of the meeting?

8. How does the school notify parents when IEP meetings or annual case reviews are being planned?

9. Are IEP meetings planned early enough to allow participants time to prepare?

10. Who generally attends IEP meetings in your district?

Standing members	Others typically present

INTERVIEW: DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

AREA IV: PLACEMENT, PROGRAMS AND RELATED SERVICES

1. Who is responsible for making the final decision on the educational placement that will be offered a child?

2. How soon after the IEP meeting has been held are parents notified of the school's proposal for placement?

3. Does the notification of placement include the following? Check all that apply.

    —— The placement offered
    —— A list of the parent's and child's rights
    —— An explanation of why one alternative was preferred over another
    —— A request for written consent
    —— Other ____________________

4. Are the parents advised that they can refuse to consent to the special education placement proposed by the school?

5. Currently, how soon after parental consent is given is a child placed into a special education program?

6. How do you determine the appropriate case load or class size for special education programs?

7. What is the maximum age range permitted in a special education classroom?

8. Under what circumstances are more then one handicapping condition served in a single classroom?

9. Are any of the following educational services currently offered to special education students? Indicate only those for whom a specific program or unit of study has been designed and is regularly being used.

—— Speech
—— Audiology
—— Occupational therapy
—— Physical therapy
—— Counseling
—— Behavior modification
—— Routine testing
—— Medical/educational evaluation
—— Art
—— Music
—— Home economics
—— Consumer education
—— Industrial arts
—— Vocational education
—— Career counseling
—— Sex education
—— Drivers education

INTERVIEW: DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

AREA V: EDUCATIONAL SETTING

1. What is the district's philosophy regarding accessibility, the integration of the handicapped, and the least restrictive educational setting?

   Accessibility:

   Integration of the Handicapped:

   Least Restrictive Educational Setting:

2. Who decides which buildings house special education programs?

3. Who determines the location of special education classrooms within buildings?

4. How well do you feel the existing facilities make it possible for special education students to be integrated educationally and socially?

5. Have any buildings recently been modified to accommodate a handicapped student? Which?

6. Are there any approved plans for future construction or modification of facilities for special education use? Describe.

7. How many special education classrooms are housed in the following locations?

   —— Integrated into regular education buildings
   —— Separate wings in regular education buildings
   —— Within a local institution
   —— Within a local nursing home
   —— Other ____________________

8. Are any of the following individualized accommodations currently being made to permit handicapped students to remain in regular education programs?

—— Interpreters for hearing impaired students
—— Readers for visually impaired students
—— Notetakers for hearing impaired students or students who cannot write
—— Tutoring for students who require additional or remedial instruction
—— Special equipment such as tape recorders and typewriters
—— Mobility training for visually impaired
—— Adjustment of schedules
—— Consultative services to regular education teachers
—— Other ____
—— None

9. Are there currently students whose right to the least restrictive environment possible must yet be met? If yes, in which area(s) of exceptionality?

10. In your opinion, what efforts must yet be made in order to insure that special education students are provided with unrestrictive, comfortable, and equal school environments?

—— Buildings must be built or modified.

—— Classrooms must be integrated to the extent possible with handicapped students.

—— Daily building routines and schedules must be modified to include students with special needs.

—— In-service training must be offered to regular education teachers.

—— Consultative and other support services must be offered to regular, as well as special education teachers.

—— The length of a handicapped student's school day must be made equivalent to that of a regular education student.

—— Age-appropriate school settings must be created for special education students

—— Transportation must be improved.

—— Attitudes of students and staff must be shaped in more positive ways.

—— Other ____

—— None

INTERVIEW: DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

AREA VI: PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR THE STUDENT AND PARENT

1. Are parents notified in writing at any of the following points in the educational process? Check all that apply.

   —— Screening of the child will take place.
   —— The child has been referred for evaluation.
   —— A change in placement is being considered.
   —— An IEP meeting is being convened.
   —— A final decision on placement has been proposed.
   —— An annual case review is being held.
   —— A request for access to the child's records is being made by a non-school employee.
   —— The child's records are to be destroyed.
   —— Expulsion, suspension, or other disciplinary action is being considered.
   —— Other ____

2. Do you have a handbook on rights of the child and parents for distribution to parents?

3. At which points do parents receive written notification of their rights?

4. Who is responsible for insuring that the confidentiality of records is maintained throughout the special education district?

5. Which of the following records are maintained by the special education district? Check all that apply.

   —— Cumulative school history (including grades, clubs, family information, disciplinary actions)
   —— IEP meeting reports
   —— IEPs
   —— School-given test and evaluation results
   —— Reports from outside specialists
   —— Copies of medical and test records shared by parents
   —— Progress reports
   —— Correspondence
   —— Anecdotal records written by school persons
   —— Other ____

6. At which location(s) are the confidential records of a single student stored?

7. How soon after the request to view their child's records are parents given access to them?

8. Are parents charged for copies of records?

9. How many formal complaints have been made to the State Division of Special Education regarding actions taken or not taken by your special education district in the past two years?

Number initiated:

Number solved at this level:

Issue(s):

10. How many requests for due process hearings on special education issues have been initiated and/or held in your special education district in the past two years?

Number initiated by parents:

Number settled prior to hearing:

Number initiated by school:

Number held:

Issue(s):

Summary of decision(s):

Identification And Evaluation Of Students

A crucial task in studying a special education district is to examine the district's delivery of screening, testing, and other diagnostic services to current and potential special education students.

All states have been required since 1974 (by Pl 93-380) to identify, locate, and evaluate handicapped children, ages 0 through 21. This does not mean, however, that once identified and evaluated the school district must go on to educate all the children it finds. Many states, because of more limited mandatory education laws, are not required to educate certain age groups. Most commonly excluded from education programs are preschool and post-secondary students. If, however, programs are offered by a given school district to non-handicapped students of any age, they must be also offered to handicapped children in that same age group. And if state laws are permissive, local districts may always go beyond the state's minimum requirements and provide programs for special groups of handicapped children. An example of this would be infant speech programs for the hearing impaired.

"CHILD FIND" PROGRAMS

Very young handicapped children, or handicapped children not being served at all, are to be located by the public schools through "child find" programs, which are ongoing public searches for special children. A well-designed child find system allows the school district to plan for the future. It also permits the identification of disabilities as early in a child's life as possible. In locations where there are few agencies serving the handicapped, the school plays an important part in helping parents identify, assess, and plan for a handicapped child's future.

A school district's "child find" program could be cursory — small yearly notices in the newspaper — or elaborate — a network of contacts within the community.

SCREENING PROGRAMS

Screening programs may be one method of identifying problems that need further investigation. In a screening, a brief measure is taken of one area of a child's performance. Often screening programs are routinely scheduled for all children of a given grade level. Parents may or may not be notified in advance or asked to give consent. Parents should always be routinely advised, however, of any problems that may have been discovered.

Screenings may range from informal teacher-made tests to specially developed testing tools. Areas covered include vision, hearing, speech, learning difficulties, motor coordination, kindergarten readiness. Levels at which screening takes place might be preschool, kindergarten, or periodically throughout the school years (Example: grades 2, 4, 6).

Less formal screening programs depend upon teachers and others having sufficient information about school procedures, persons to contact, services available, and signs in children that might indicate special needs. Schools should provide teachers and parents in particular with guidelines that can help in the identification of children with potential learning problems.

REFERRAL FOR EVALUATION

Any person who suspects that a child may benefit from special education may refer the child for an evaluation furnished without charge by the public school district. If the parents were not the source of the referral, they must be informed that a referral has been made. A parent's written consent must also be obtained before an evaluation can take place.

Referrals come most commonly from teachers, social service agencies, physicians, and parents.

WHAT IS AN EVALUATION?

When a student is evaluated, an attempt is made to develop as complete a picture of a child as possible. Information about the student's intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development should be collected through a variety of methods — by means of screening, testing, and observation. In the case of measurement of vocational aptitude, "hands on" experience would be an evaluative method.

For the handicapped child, the purpose of evaluation is to determine the extent and nature of the child's education needs.

A thorough evaluation can give answers to many education-related questions.

(1) What has the child learned so far? What is the child not able to do?
(2) How does the child learn best? Using which senses? In what kind of atmosphere? With which approach?
(3) Where do the child's potential strengths and weaknesses lie?
(4) How does the child feel about himself? Interact with others?
(5) What are the child's aptitudes and interests?

WHO EVALUATES A STUDENT?

A thorough evaluation involves the efforts of a variety of individuals: 1) school personnel such as psychometrists and teachers, 2) professionals such as physicians and non-school psychologists, and 3) parents.

Local public school personnel are primarily responsible for making available, without charge, evaluation and diagnostic services to school-age children. In cases where special diagnosis or testing would be useful, but is not available from the school staff, the school and parents may jointly or separately enlist the services of outside specialists. Such specialized testing may be found at area universities, hospitals, clinics, mental health centers, and from privately practicing physicians or psychologists.

Since special tests most often form the core of an evaluation, it is most likely that the school's psychometrist or psychologist will be the individual primarily responsible for collecting and presenting data about the child.

- A psychometrist is a person trained in psychological measurement, with the ability to administer and interpret the results of individual and group tests, and make recommendations regarding learning capabilities.
- A psychologist is trained in psychology, usually clinical, counseling, or school psychology. He or she may or may not have strong skills in testing, depending upon the college program under which he prepared. A skilled psychologist can provide consultation, make recommendations, and determine social and emotional adjustment and learning capabilities by interpreting test results. Psychologists are also able to offer counseling or therapy in some cases.

Others who may be able to administer and interpret diagnostic tests are specialists in speech and hearing, learning disabilities, behavior modification, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.

Parents play several roles in the evaluation process:

- Parents give written permission before any testing of their child can take place.
- Parents share what they know about their child — medical history, physical limitations, behavior, social needs, personality, family background -- with the expectation that this knowledge will be added to whatever other test and observation data is collected.
- Parents discuss with the testers and school program planners the results of any tests.

HOW OFTEN IS A STUDENT EVALUATED?

An IEP meeting, which determines the placement of a child into a special education program, must take place within a specified number of days from the time a child is referred for evaluation. (See your state's special education regulations.) Evaluation results must be compiled, therefore, within that same time span.

In addition to the initial pre-placement evaluation, the school district should routinely offer a new and complete re-evaluation to each special education student every two to three years. Parents, teachers, and others may request a new evaluation, however, at any time. Re-evaluations need to be done in the same thorough manner as the first evaluation the child received, i.e., with a team approach, a variety of tests, and parental consent.

TESTS ARE ONLY ONE EVALUATION TECHNIQUE

Tests are basic equipment in evaluation. They should not be, however, the only means of arriving at a clear picture of an individual. Observation of the child in a variety of situations from the perspective of a variety of individuals — parents included — is just as important.

The purpose for which a test is given will help determine whether testing has been fair and the results useful.

- Tests can predict a child's level of learning success.
- Tests can describe a child in terms of where learning might begin.
- Tests can measure and record progress.

Testing instruments need to be carefully chosen. Testing is useful only insofar as it diagnoses the child's strengths and weaknesses, and results can be used in educational planning.

A child requiring special education should have as comprehensive a series of tests as possible. Look for a variety of tests. *See Appendix for a sample listing of each category described below.*

- Standardized achievement tests measure educational achievement.

  These tests measure what the child has learned up to the date of the test in academic areas such as math, reading, etc. They are often group administered.

- IQ tests measure aptitude for learning.

  Such tests permit a comparison of children at similar age levels. IQ tests measure mental age and are based on the assumption that mental development parallels chronological development. Intelligence tests can tell where learning might begin. They should never be used to limit a child to any single category.

- Adaptive behavior and personality tests measure behavior, personality, and social interaction.

  Tests of adaptive behavior measure the child's independence and social responsibility, given his or her age and cultural group. Such tests draw on the observations of parents and others. Tests of adaptive behavior are used increasingly. Personality tests provide information about the personal and social aspects of a child's world. They can help describe how a disabled child copes with being dependent, how he sees himself, and how he deals with others. Traditional personality tests vary in quality and validity and are not always useful. Projective personality tests allow children to project their own thoughts, feelings, needs, and motives into their responses. Self-report personality tests require the child to describe himself.

- Special diagnostic tests measure brain functions or information processing.

  Tests of this kind measure sensory perception, motor skills, speech, memory, and learning styles. They are based on the assumption that in order to integrate learning, a child must go through a sequence of steps. A child may experience difficulty at one or more points along the line. These tests can indicate the presence of a problem resulting from brain injury, emotional maladjustment, slow development, or a combination of these.

- Vocational tests and interest inventories help predict vocational aptitude.

  Aptitude tests measure characteristics that tell how well a person may perform specific job-related tasks. Interest inventories enable an individual's likes and dislikes to be compared to those of persons considered successful in various occupations. Like personality tests, they too can vary in quality and validity and are often difficult to adapt to the needs of a handicapped individual.

ADAPTING TESTS TO THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD

Evaluation procedures may need to be adapted to the individual child.

- Observation or teacher-made tests may be more appropriate for a certain child than standardized tests.
- Individually-administered tests might be better than group administered ones.
- The length of time allowed to complete a test might be expanded, or readers or tape recorders provided, and such adaptations noted in the report.

- Professionally-made *tests already adapted* to the hearing or physically impaired could be substituted for regular versions of those tests.
- If speech is a problem, interpreters (perhaps the parent) could be present to assist.

Tests need to be carefully selected. It is also important to know that tests are designed to be scored differently. Some tests, *norm-referenced*, are meant to compare a student with other students. A child's performance is compared with the performance of a similar group of students who took the same test in a nation-wide sample. If the child has similarities with the group on which the test was normed, and if such comparative information is valuable in helping determine a child's placement, then norm-referenced achievement tests would be appropriate.

Criterion-referenced tests, on the other hand, compare a student not *with other students*, but with his or her own past performance. These tests are designed to measure whether a child has mastered a specific skill. The idea here is to "teach for the test", to measure whether the child has learned successfully or still needs to learn. There are no time limits on such tests and they can be taken over and over again so that the child's growth can be traced. Often criterion-referenced tests are teacher-made.

The setting in which a specific evaluation procedure is used is also pertinent to how well a child performs. Most tests require quiet, non-threatening settings. Observations of a child can be made in the *classroom*, on the *playground*, or in the *home*. Some diagnostic tests require *special equipment* (such as blocks or balance beams), or *specially devised rooms* (such as soundproof areas for audiological testing).

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

In studying your school district's use of tests, look for the following evidence of a conscientious approach:

- *More than one* test is given to each child.
- The battery of tests offered each child is *individualized* to meet the varying needs of the handicapped. The same two or three tests are not routinely given to every child referred regardless of disability.
- Testing situations are *adapted* or adjusted when necessary to accommodate the needs of handicapped children and to allow them the opportunity to show what they can *do* rather than *not do*. While scores obtained under conditions different from those in the manual may not be statistically valid, they *are* useful diagnostically.

- Testers are knowledgeable and sensitive, with an awareness of their own limitations and the limitations of the testing instruments.

See ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST in Section 4 for specific points for comparison.

ASSESSMENT AREA II: IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Interview: Student Evaluation

Use the interview form for Student Evaluation and information from the Parent Interview form to piece together a picture of how students are tested and evaluated.

1) Determine the person or persons in charge of scheduling and administering evaluations. This may be:
   - The head of the Testing and Psychological Services Department
   - The head of Pupil Personnel
   - A staff psychometrist
   - The Director of Special Education
2) Interview as many people as necessary to provide complete information.
3) Call each person prior to your visit to make an appointment and explain your purpose. You may want to mail the Interview form for the interviewee to see and/or fill out in advance.

See Appendix A for suggestions for conducting this interview.

Interview: Student Evaluation

Name ______________________ Department ______________________

Position ______________________ Date ______________________

1. Are the diagnostic and evaluation services part of, or separate from, the department of special education?

2. To whom is the administrator of these services responsible?

3. Which of the following services are provided? Check only those for which this department has direct responsibility.

List A: EVALUATIVE AND DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES PROVIDED.

—— 1. Screening to identify children
—— 2. Administering psychological tests
—— 3. Interpreting test results
—— 4. Consulting with teachers and parents

List B: SERVICES RELATED TO THE ABOVE.

—— 5. Processing referrals and contacting parents
—— 6. Attending IEP meetings
—— 7. Assisting in developing IEPs
—— 8. Providing individual counselling
—— 9. Providing in-service training
——10. Acting as liaison with outside agencies

4. Describe the staff persons who provide the above services.

	No.	Full or Part Time	Responsibilities (by number from Lists A & B)
Psychometrist ______			
Psychologist ______			
Specialists (specify) ______			
______			
______			
Guidance counselor ______			
Social worker ______			
School nurse ______			
Teachers ______			
Other ______			

5. In terms of the current range of professional skills available from your staff, which areas of exceptionality is your staff least able to evaluate thoroughly?

—— Communication handicapped
—— Seriously emotionally disturbed
—— Hearing impaired, deaf
—— Multiply handicapped
—— Mildly and moderately mentally handicapped
—— Severely mentally handicapped
—— Physically handicapped
—— Learning disabled
—— Visually impaired, blind

6. What is the testing caseload per psychometrist/psychologist?

7. What is the average time spent evaluating one child?

8. Which school personnel makes up a typical evaluation team?

9. Do you ever refer students to outside agencies for testing? If yes, specify service provider.

10. In what ways are parents routinely involved in the evaluation process? Check all that apply.

—— Parents are invited to pre-evaluation meetings at the time a referral is made.
—— Parents give written consent for evaluation.
—— Parents fill out a family and medical history form on child.
—— Parents are invited to a post-evaluation meeting to explain test results (prior to IEP meeting).
—— Parents share their knowledge of child at IEP meetings.
—— Other

11. From where are referrals for evaluation accepted?

12. During the past school year, how many children in the following age groups have been referred?

—— 0 - 2
—— 3 - 5
—— 6 - 18
—— 19 - 21

13. Of those children referred for an initial evaluation this year:

—— % were evaluated within your state's timelines.

—— % are backlogged.

Average length of delay is ________________________.

14. How long does it currently take from the time of referral to the completion of one student's evaluation?

15. Of those children due for a routine 3-year re-evaluation:

—— % are served on time.

—— % are backlogged.

Average length of delay is ________________________.

16. In what way does the 3-year re-evaluation differ from a child's initial pre-placement evaluation?

17. Are any screening programs offered to help identify children with special problems?

Through your department:

Offered by other departments:

Programs sponsored by non-school sources:

18. Briefly describe the types of tests that are used to measure the following areas:

Educational Achievement

Aptitude for Learning (IQ)

Adaptive Behavior, Personality, Social Interaction

Special Diagnosis (perception, motor, communication skills)

19. Which school department offers vocational testing? Briefly describe the types of evaluation procedures used.

20. How are tests adapted when the handicapped child has problems with:

Reception or Perception (does not understand question)?

Expression (cannot communicate)?

Processing Information (brain damage, different culture)?

21. In addition to standardized testing, what other methods of evaluation are used?

Education-Related Services

Education-related services are an essential part of special education. A good school includes whatever developmental, corrective, or other support services are needed to help a handicapped child in benefitting from the special education program.

As with other elements of a handicapped child's program, education-related services should be available to all school-aged children without charge, and should meet the state certification standards.

Any related services to be provided under the school's supervision should be stated in the child's individualized education program (IEP). The type of services, frequency, duration of service, and who is to provide it should be clearly spelled out.

SERVICES SPECIFIED BY LAW

All but Number 14 of the following related services are specifically suggested in federal regulations (PL 94-142, paragraph 121a.5).

1. Audiology
2. Counseling services
3. Early identification of preschool children
4. Medical services for educational diagnostic purposes
5. Occupational therapy
6. Parent counseling and training
7. Physical therapy
8. Psychological services
9. Recreation
10. School health services
11. Social work services
12. Speech pathology
13. Transportation
14. Behavior modification

Education-related services may be provided by school specialists or by contract with private specialists or service agencies. Because of the new demand for specialists in fields like physical or occupational therapy, school districts often have difficulty finding qualified persons. A district should be able to show evidence of serious attempts to recruit, however.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

In studying your school district's provision of related services, look for the following indications of a conscientious approach:

- All necessary support services are available to enable students to benefit from their educational programs.
- Each child's IEP clearly states which related services are needed and how they are to be provided.

See ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST in Section 4 for specific points for comparison.

ASSESSMENT AREA IV: PLACEMENT INTO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RELATED SERVICES

Worksheet 1: Education-Related Services

Education-related services are usually the responsibility of a variety of school departments or staff persons. Your local director of special education should be able to list the services currently available.

1) Determine the persons in charge of each service. This may be either a department or the person actually performing the service, i.e. therapist or social worker.
    - Audiology and speech may be found together under the direction of a supervisor for language and speech.
    - Counseling services and social work may be offered through a separate guidance and counseling department, by testing and psychological services, or pupil personnel services.
    - Adaptive physical education and recreation may be under the supervisor for physical education or the physical therapist.
    - The director of special education may have selective responsibility.
2) Use one worksheet per service.
3) Plan to interview as many people as necessary to provide complete information. Keep in mind that there may be divisions of responsibility that require more than one person to be interviewed.
4) Call each person prior to your visit to make an appointment and explain your purpose. You may want to mail Worksheet 1: Education-Related Services in advance of your visit to allow the interviewee time to prepare.
5) If there are a number of people to interview, recruit others to assist in the process or send forms to each person to complete and return. Conduct a follow-up interview later regarding any issues on which there are questions.

Date ______________________

WORKSHEET 1 EDUCATION RELATED SERVICES

Circle one.
Use one Worksheet
per service

Adaptive physical education
Occupational therapy
School health services
Behavior modification

Parent education
Physical therapy
Social work
Audiology

Counseling
Recreation
Speech
Other ______________________

---

1. HOW SERVICE IS PROVIDED

____ Direct service/therapy to handicapped child

___ On an individual basis
___ In a group
Size range of group: ______________
___ Consultation to the teacher
___ Counseling for parents

2. NUMBER OF CHILDREN SERVED

_____ Communication handicapped
_____ Seriously emotionally disturbed
_____ Hearing impaired
_____ Deaf
_____ Multiply handicapped
_____ Mildly mentally handicapped
_____ Moderately mentally handicapped
_____ Severely mentally handicapped
_____ Physically handicapped
_____ Learning disabled
_____ Visually impaired
_____ Blind
_____ Other ______________________

_____ Children identified but not yet served

3. AVERAGE TIME SPENT PER CHILD

Minimum __________ per week/month
Maximum __________ per week/month

4. PERSONNEL PROVIDING SERVICE

Title/Position	Caseload	Full time	Part time	Private Contractor	Itinerant	Permanent Bldg. Assgnmt

5. SETTING WHERE SERVICE IS AVAILABLE

BUILDINGS	Adequate		Inadequate	
	Space	Equipment	Space	Equipment

Transportation

Transportation is one of the education-related services that almost always needs to be provided in order for handicapped children to benefit from the public education programs and services that are now available to them. Broadly defined, transportation means (1) conveying the child to and from school at the beginning and conclusion of each school day, (2) conveying the child between buildings if his or her programs are located in more than one place, and (3) providing the child with mobility assistance within each building if necessary.

Transportation has been assumed by American school systems as a public responsibility, and is available without charge to all children requiring it, including handicapped students.

The issue of transportation is a big concern for parents of special education students because many students do not attend school in the same building as other children in their neighborhoods. Transportation is also a big concern for public school districts because of all the complexities involved in providing the service: scheduling, the costs of buses and gasoline, the long distances that might be covered, extra aides, etc.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Transporting children raises many issues in the minds of parents:

1) How far away from home is the child's assigned school?
2) How long will the child's bus ride be?
3) Will the child transfer from one bus to another in the course of a one-way trip?
4) Will the child ride in a safe, properly equipped vehicle?
5) Will the driver be trained to deal with the mobility or emergency problems a handicapped child may have?
6) Will there be an aide to assist the driver?
7) Will the child arrive at school on time?
8) Will the child's school day be lengthened or shortened in any way?
9) If the child crosses into another school district, are school calendars of each district coordinated so that transportation will not be interrupted by vacations?
10) If a parent transports his or her own child, will the school give reimbursement for mileage?

Attending a school at a distance could involve bus transfers and long rides which are difficult for some children. It might also cause the child to arrive at school late or have to leave early.

This could interfere with the child's instructional day, and could also single the child out as being different. If the child depends upon buses from more than one school district, there may be days the child will not have transportation to school if some buses are not in operation due to school vacations.

Drivers need to be aware of the special needs of the handicapped children for whom they are responsible. Some children may need to be accompanied by trained aides. Drivers and aides must know what action to take in the case of a medical emergency, signs to notice that would indicate the child is having difficulty of some sort, and instructions as to the movement of the child if assistance is necessary. Training is essential for all drivers, whether they are employed by the school district or by private companies that supply the service.

Specially equipped vans or buses with wheelchair restraints, seat belts, guard rails, grab handles, power lifts, special lights, and so on are also important for handicapped children with specific mobility needs.

Your local school district may have written standards for the transportation of handicapped children that reflect the minimum school bus standards of the state. It may be valuable to acquire a copy if your study of transportation is to be in-depth.

See ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST in Section 4 for specific points for comparison.

ASSESSMENT AREA I: ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ASSESSMENT AREA IV: PLACEMENT INTO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RELATED SERVICES

Interview: Special Education Transportation

The Interview form for Special Education Transportation, and a part of the Parent Interview form are designed to help your study team collect information about how tranportation is designed and admisistered in your local school district.

1) Determine the person or persons in charge of planning and scheduling tranportation. This may be one or more of the following:
   - Director of special education or an assistant.
   - Coordinator of transportation for the school district (or the coordinators for each of the several member districts if it is a special education cooperative).
   - Superintendents of schools.
   - Representative of the private transportation firm with whom the school contracts.
   - Representative of the bus drivers, if buses are privately owned by independent contractors.
2) Plan to interview as many people as necessary to provide complete information. Keep in mind that there may be divisions of responsibility that require more than one person to be interviewed.
3) Call each person prior to your visit to make an appointment and explain your purpose. You may want to mail the Interview form in advance of your visit to allow the interviewee time to prepare.
4) If there are several people to interview, others might be recruited to assist in the interview process or the forms could be sent to the persons to complete and return. A follow-up would be conducted later regarding any issues on which there are questions.

If more detail about individual children's transportation schedules is needed, use Worksheet 2: Transportation Survey.

Interview: Special Education Transportation

Name and Position ______________________________

Special Education District ______________________ Date __________

1. Who makes the following decisions regarding travel arrangements for special education students?
    - a) Creating the budget
    - b) Purchasing equipment
    - c) Contracting with drivers and transportation firms
    - d) Cooperative agreements between districts
    - e) Hiring aides
    - f) Designing the bus routes and scheduling
    - g) Solving problems and answering questions of parents
2. How many special education children travel to school in each of the following ways? Indicate number:
    - ___ School bus with regular education students
    - ___ School bus for special education students only
    - ___ Specially equipped van or bus
    - ___ Private car or taxi with costs paid by school
    - ___ Private car with costs paid by parent
    - ___ Public (city) bus
    - ___ By foot
    - ___ Not requiring service
3. Must any children yet be served? If yes, approximately how many?

4. Does your school system provide the following. Check all that apply.

   —— Transportation between school buildings?
   —— Transportation between the school and an outside agency providing a school-related service?
   —— Transportation to special school functions and field trips (when also provided for regular education students)?

5. What issues are considered when deciding the route and mode of transportation that will be provided for a special education student?

6. Do you contract with any private transportation firms (cab companies, special transportation services) to provide all or a portion of the needed transportation? If yes, with whom and to what extent?

7. Who owns the vehicles used to transport handicapped students?

8. Are buses/vans used to transport special education students properly equipped to accommodate handicapped children? If yes, check all that apply.

   —— Safety devices, such as guard rails and handles
   —— Wheelchair restraints
   —— Power wheelchair lifts
   —— Seat belts
   —— Other ____________________________

9. How is proper maintenance provided for the vehicles used to transport special education students?

10. How are drivers trained, both school and non-school employees?

11. Are any of the following procedures included in the special education transportation program? Check all that apply.

   —— In-service training for drivers and aides
   —— Regular unannounced safety inspections
   —— Emergency drills for passengers

13. Are parents reimbursed if they provide transportation? If yes, what is the rate of reimbursement?

14. Do transportation schedules to and from school cause any special education students to miss part of the instructional day?

15. Do special education students who attend school outside their home district miss days during the school year because the school calendars are not coordinated and transportation is not available?

Worksheet 2: Transportation Survey

If a problem with transportation appears to exist, more information might need to be requested from a larger number of parents than were contracted for the Parent Interview.

Information about an individual child's mode of transportation and length of school day will come from parents. Information on the school day for non-handicapped children may have to be collected directly from the school district, or the building principal. The information regarding non-handicapped children is necessary for comparison to determine if handicapped children are getting equivalent education programs.

COLLECTING INFORMATION

Information from parents could be collected in one of four ways:

- Meetings. Call a special meeting of parents whose children attend buildings where transportation scheduling problems exist. Or request time at a regularly scheduled PTA or PTO meeting to publicize the survey and request input.
- Telephone survey. To accomplish this, a list of names and telephone numbers of children enrolled in special education are needed, as well as several dependable volunteers to make the calls. A list of names would probably not be directly available from the school because of confidentiality factors, but PTO membership lists or lists compiled by word of mouth, etc., could be collected.
- Mailing. The cost of a mailing campaign is greater than other methods of contact and the percentage of parents responding would probably be lower. Again, securing a complete or well-balanced list of names and addresses could present a problem.
- Cosponsorship with the school. Ask the principal of schools with special transportation problems to assist in documenting gaps or weaknesses in transportation services. Send out a questionnaire designed from Worksheet 2: Transportation Survey to individual parents asking for facts on time, distance, length of school day, etc.

DIRECTIONS FOR USING WORKSHEET 2

Column:

1) INITIALS. The initials of the individual students being studied in the transportation survey.
2) AGE. The chronological age of each student.
3) GRADE/LEVEL. The category into which each student is grouped.
    a) By grade - give number.
    b) By level - specify infant, preschool, primary, intermediate, middle school, junior high, secondary.
4) HOME SCHOOL DISTRICT. The school district in which each student resides and with which responsibility for providing transportation rests.
5) MODE OF TRANSPORTATION. The manner in which the handicapped student moves to and from school.
    a) BUS/REG. - Regular school bus.
    b) BUS/SP. - Special education school bus.
    c) VAN - Specially equipped van.
    d) TAXI - Private car or taxi with costs paid by school.
    e) CAR - Private car with costs paid by parent.
    f) PUB. BUS - Public bus.
    g) FOOT - By foot.
6) SCHOOL BUILDING. The school building to which the child is assigned for the majority of his or her day (the receiving school). Do not include, for the purposes of this survey, other buildings to which the child might be transported in the course of a day.
7) SCHOOL DAY, BEGIN-END, NON-HANDICAPPED. The time the school day begins and ends in the school building noted above. Example: 8:15 - 2:30. NOTE: If the building is a separate special education facility that serves only handicapped students, mark N/A (not applicable). Or, for purposes of comparison, select a regular education building nearby serving children of the same age or level and use its school day to measure against.
8) INSTRUCTIONAL TIME, NON-HANDICAPPED. The amount of time actually spent by regular education students in learning activities during the course of one school day. Depending upon state law, this may or may not include recess time, or lunch periods. Naps should not be included. Example: 5 hours 30 minutes.
9) SCHOOL DAY, BEGIN-END, HANDICAPPED. The times the school day begins and ends for the student in the school building noted in Column 6. Example: 8:15 - 2:30.

10. INSTRUCTIONAL TIME, HANDICAPPED. The amount of time actually spent by the student in learning activities. This may include lunch period, if feeding skills are a legitimate part of the student's program, and recess. Naps or extensive time spent

being transported between buildings should not be included. Example: 5 hours 14 minutes.

11) DIFFERENCE/INSTRUCTIONAL TIME. The difference between instructional time offered to non-handicapped students and handicapped students. Subtract Column 10 from Column 8. Example: +30 minutes or -16 minutes.

12) AM/TRANSPORTATION TIME. The amount of time the student spends in transit in the morning. Include time spent on a vehicle and any waiting time spent between boarding vehicles, if the student must transfer from one vehicle to another. Example: 45 minutes.

13) PM/TRANSPORTATION TIME. The amount of time the student spends in transit or transferring between vehicles at the end of his or her school day. Example: 30 minutes.

14) TOTAL TRAVELING TIME. The total amount of time the student spends in transit in the course of one day. Add Column 12 to Column 13. Example: 1 hour 15 minutes.

WORKSHEET 2 TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

Date ____________

A. PUPIL INFORMATION					B. SCHOOL INFORMATION						C. TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION		
						Non-Handicapped Students		Handicapped Students					
Initials 1	Age 2	Program Level 3	Home School District 4	Mode of Transp. 5	School Building 6	School Day Begin-End 7	Instructional Time 8	School Day Begin-End 9	Instructional Time 10	Difference in Instr. Time 11	AM Transpo. Time 12	PM Transpo. Time 13	Total Traveling Time 14

Programs And Educational Setting

The most appropriate educational setting for a handicapped child is one that is comparable in as many ways as possible to that of any typical child.

At the optimum, this means:

- The child is integrated to the greatest extent appropriate into regular school programs that are located in neighborhood school buildings.
- The child has the same opportunity to pursue a course of study that will suit his or her personal and occupational needs.
- The daily school routine of lunch breaks, recesses, library periods, music and art classes, bus rides, and so on are the same or comparable for the handicapped child.
- Group activities include the handicapped child whenever possible, and that school-sponsored recreation, clubs, athletics and job opportunities are available and open to qualified handicapped students.
- Involvement in the educational mainstream will promote social integration, which is the right of all.

That's the ideal, based on the assumption that the handicapped child's educational needs can be fully met in the typical school setting. Rarely, however, is the typical school setting perfectly suited to meeting the unique educational needs of a handicapped individual. Section 504 makes the point that, in order to insure equality of educational opportunity as well as quality in individualized programming, different or special treatment may be necessary.

The key to a good educational setting for a handicapped student is flexibility on the part of the school system. This means flexibility in both programming and physical facilities.

INDIVIDUALIZED ACCOMMODATIONS IN PROGRAMMING

The mere availability of school programs, even specially designed programs, is not enough. School programs must be accessible, that is, able to be used by a handicapped student. Public schools need to be alert to ways in which they can reasonably accommodate each individual handicapped child so that he or she can best profit from the education offered.

The basis from which to build, of course, is a well-designed Individualized Education Program (IEP), which reflects the child's current level of ability. Beyond the IEP, reasonable accommodations can take many forms.

- Education-related support services. Some services can be crucial in making programs accessible in the real sense of the word, as in the case of transportation to and from school. Other support services accommodate by enhancing the child's potential for learning, as physical therapy does. Special tutors, resource teachers, consultants, and aides could also be utilized.
- Personal assistance. Interpreters for the hearing-impaired, readers for the blind, and notetakers for the physically disabled are examples of individualized accommodations that enable the student to benefit from the program.
- Special equipment. Specially-designed equipment can be bought or adapted to suit a learning task to a child. Tapes and visual or tactile devices can be used in instances where traditional textbooks are not enough. Typewriters, language boards, and tape recorders could also be used to enable a child to communicate.
- Careful scheduling. The conscientious scheduling of programs and daily school activities is another method of sensitively handling a handicapped student's needs. For example, a jointly scheduled lunch hour with advance entrance (if necessary) by wheelchair-bound students, would strike a balance between mainstreaming and individualization. An all-school field day might include adapted or special athletic events for the handicapped students.*

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*As far as traditional athletic programs are concerned, the U.S. Office of Civil Rights has suggested that eligibility for sports be determined in the following manner:

1) The opportunity could be given to all, including the handicapped, to demonstrate their skills, measuring against the minimum skills necessary for participation.
2) The criteria for skills could be based on the goal of the activity (for example: getting the ball into the basket) rather than the technique (perfectly positioned side shots).
3) Separate or different specialized sports programs could be offered, if appropriate to the needs of the handicapped person.

"Civil Rights, Handicapped Persons, and Education: Section 504 Self-Evaluation Guide for Preschool, Elementary, Secondary, and Adult Education" (August 1978) p. 74.

INDIVIDUALIZED ACCOMMODATIONS IN FACILITIES

Occasionally, school programs are not accessible or buildings safe because physical barriers exist. For example, a second floor science lab may not be accessible to a wheelchair-bound science student, doorways may not be wide enough, or hazards such as slippery floors may exist in hallways.

Under such circumstances, if there is no other feasible way to make an activity accessible, the school building or parts of it (including walkways and equipment) may need to be structurally modified or adapted.

Adaptation may be as simple as non-skid strips on floors and paper cup dispensers at water fountains, or more complicated, such as a redesigned entry to the swimming pool or the installation of a chair lift.

It is not required by Section 504 that every building or part of a building be barrier-free or totally accessible. A single child's program and the location in which it is provided needs to be accessible to him or her, however.

Often moving the child's program to a different floor or building will meet the accessibility needs of a child or group of children. This is often the most reasonable solution. It needs to be balanced, however, with several considerations:

1) Facilities chosen for handicapped students should be comparable in as many ways as possible to those for the non-handicapped. Separate wings or basement storage rooms would not be suitable substitutions, for example.
2) The setting should be as close to home as possible in appropriate surroundings. A school building on the outskirts of a neighboring town would be less desirable than a building centrally located in the community.
3) A separate special school should be considered only if the facility is comparable to a regular setting in as many ways as possible and only if it meets unique needs. A round-the-clock behavior modification program at a school for the seriously emotionally disturbed would be an example.

In the case of new buildings, all current construction must comply with the accessibility standards of the American National Standards Institute, Inc. or an equivalent state standard.

Parents and handicapped students themselves can play an important role in determining how facilities and programs can be made accessible. Section 504 in fact requires the involvement of the handicapped in the planning process to assist in identifying barriers and ordering priorities. Often accommodations individualized to meet the needs of a student can be simply and inexpensively accomplished.

Adaptations of the environment can take many forms. Whatever they are, the goal of self-sufficiency for the handicapped individual is as important a consideration as comparability of facilities, appropriateness of program, and the integration of all.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

In studying your school district's provision of programs to handicapped students and the settings in which they are provided, look for the following indications of a conscientious approach:

- Programs are designed to meet the individual needs of students for whom they are provided.
- Handicapped students, based on their individual needs, are integrated with non-handicapped students to the greatest extent possible.
- A continuum of educational settings are available so that each handicapped student can be educated in the least restrictive environment for him or her.
- Both physical and programmatic accommodations are made to enable handicapped students to benefit from their educational programs.

See ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST in Section 4 for specific points for comparison.

ASSESSMENT AREA IV: PLACEMENT INTO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RELATED SERVICES

ASSESSMENT AREA V: EDUCATIONAL SETTING

Worksheets 3 & 4: Building Visits

Before making each visit, careful groundwork must be laid.

The purpose of visiting individual school buildings will be twofold:

- To gather first-hand knowledge about the programs and services offered to each building's handicapped students.
- To learn whether the physical facilities and the school's use of the facilities offer an accessible and integrated educational setting to the handicapped student.

COLLECTING INFORMATION

1) Meet with the director of special education. Indicate the purpose of your teams' visits, as well as the data collection methods you intend to use.
2) Find out which buildings house handicapped students. Ask for a list of buildings and their locations. A map of the school district will be helpful as well.
3) Select the buildings you will visit. This may range from every building within the special education district to only a selected sampling.
4) Assign teams of two to visit the buildings. If possible, select a parent of a child served in each building to be one of the two visitors.
5) Request that the director of special education give the building principals advance notice that one or two individuals will be visiting his or her building.
6) Contact each principal by phone to set up an appointment. Explain the purpose of your visit and offer to send along copies of two Worksheets that will outline the kind of information you would like to collect. It will not be necessary for the principal to fill out the Worksheets prior to your visit. Conduct the building visit in two parts:
   - A 30-minute interview with the principal, and/or special education teachers at which time you collect information on the program, facilities and staff using Worksheet 3: Building Visit/Program Information.
   - A 20-minute tour of the building using Worksheet 4: Building Visit/Physical Facilities.

INTERVIEWING THE BUILDING PRINCIPAL AND/OR TEACHERS

It is very important to set a non-threatening tone. Not all principals will react with sympathy or interest when you explain the purpose of your visit. Be very careful not to convey anything about appropriateness or inappropriateness of the facilities or the program. Your major concern is to ask questions and collect data in an organized fashion.

Unless the building serves only special education students, don't be surprised if the principal does not have a clear picture of exactly what is required in the way of an appropriate educational setting for handicapped students. He or she should be able, however, to convey information about professional and itinerant staff serving students. Use Worksheet 3: Building Visit/Program Information as your guide in asking questions. Details not known by the principal may need to be asked of the teachers, either during the building tour or at another scheduled meeting.

TOURING THE BUILDING

Spend the final 20 minutes considering the physical aspects of the building. Be sure to explain to the principal that it is your group's understanding that not every building or part of a building will need to meet complete accessibility standards. It is the programs, rather than the buildings, that must be accessible to the handicapped student. The purpose in collecting this information is to combine it with data about the programs for the handicapped in order to determine whether the district has overall program accessibility for its handicapped students.

Using Worksheet 4: Building Visit/Physical Facilities, briefly inquire about the type and number of rooms available within the building. Ask that the principal or someone else accompany you on a walking tour of the building. This will permit you to make note of the location of special rooms, the overall physical condition, and any adaptations or special equipment. If conditions are especially poor at the building you might want to delay your written notetaking until after you leave the premises. Complete your report on that building as soon after you leave it as possible.

The fact regarding the usage of general use areas will have a bearing on how well-integrated the handicapped are into the daily school routines. If any additional information is offered regarding meals, recess, arrival and departure, and other scheduled activities, make note of it.

See Appendix for further do's and dont's of interviewing.

DIRECTIONS FOR USING WORKSHEET 3: BUILDING VISIT/PROGRAM INFORMATION

Column:

1) PROGRAM/HANDICAP. Identify the students served, either by program into which child is grouped, or by child's primary handicapping condition.
2) NUMBER OF STUDENTS. Indicate the number of children enrolled of the above description.
3) GRADE/LEVEL. Indicate the categories into which the children are grouped.
    a) By grade - give number
    b) By level - specify infant, preschool, primary, intermediate, middle school, junior high, secondary
4) AGE RANGE. Describe each grade or level in terms of the youngest and oldest child currently served within that group.
5) TEACHERS — SPECIAL EDUCATION. Indicate the number of full time teachers whose primary assignment is a special education classroom. Note with an asterisk (*) any who are not properly certified for their assignment.
6) TEACHERS — REGULAR EDUCATION. Indicate the regular classroom teachers from who handicapped students receive instruction. Use the following code:

CT - Classroom teacher to whom child is primarily assigned or in whose room a child is "mainstreamed" for the majority of the day.
MU - Music teacher
ART - Art teacher
PE - Physical education teacher
HE - Home economics teacher
SHOP - Industrial arts, woodshop, etc.
VOC - Vocational education teacher
LIB - Librarian
LANG - Foreign language teacher
MATH - Math teacher
SS - Social studies teacher
SCI - Science teacher
BL - Bi-lingual teacher
RM - Remedial math
RR - Remedial reading
Other - specify

7) SPECIALISTS — NUMBER and TYPE. Using the code below, indicate the number and types of specialists, therapists, and aides providing specialized instruction or an education-related service to handicapped students.

PA - Paid aides
VA - Volunteer aides
OT - Occupational therapist
PT - Physical therapist
SP - Speech therapist
LD - Learning disabilities teacher
BM - Behavior modification specialists
APE - Adaptive physical education teacher
C - Counselor
N - Nurse
- Other - specify

8) SCHEDULE. Indicate the actual amount of time the specialists spend serving handicapped children in the building. Example:

M-W-F, 60/min./day, or 5 hrs./wk.

9) FULL TIME REGULAR CLASS. Record the number of children assigned full time to a regular classroom.

10) REGULAR CLASS plus RESOURCE ROOM. Record the number of children assigned to a regular classroom with less than half of their time spent in a resource room with a special teacher.

11) FULL TIME SPECIAL CLASS. Record the number of children assigned full time to a special education classroom.

12) COMBINATION SPECIAL AND REGULAR CLASSES. Record the number of children assigned to a special education classroom with less than half of their time spent in regular classes.

WORKSHEET 4: BUILDING VISIT/PHYSICAL FACILITIES

Worksheet 4 will serve as a means of arriving at the following information:

- The quality and accessibility of individual school buildings
- The availability of special equipment for special needs
- Whether free integrated use of the facility takes place

Use one Worksheet per building visited

General Information

Fill in general information about the school. Indicate the total number of handicapped students served in that building. Also indicate the number who have any of the following physical incapacities:

1) Non-ambulatory. For all practical purposes, individuals confined to wheelchairs.
2) Semi-ambulatory. Individuals who walk with difficulty or insecurity such as those using braces or crutches, amputees, and those with spastic or arthritic limbs.
3) Visually disabled. Individuals whose sight is affected to the extent that they are insecure or exposed to danger in public areas.
4) Hearing disabled. Individuals who are insecure in public areas because they are unable to communicate or hear warning signals.

Section I - REGULAR EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

For purposes of comparison, describe the number, location, and overall physical condition of the rooms available to regular education students. Use the CODE indicated at the top of Worksheet 4.

Section II - SPECIAL EDUCATION ROOMS

Type and Number. Indicate the type and number of each room available for the specialized use of students in special education programs. Types of rooms likely to be found are:

1) Self-contained classroom. Contains a separate program and serves children with approximately the same abilities and needs. Usually only one teacher is responsible for the activities within that room. For example there may be self-contained classrooms for the mildly mentally handicapped, deaf, multiply handicapped, etc. List each self-contained classroom by room number, teacher's name, or program name.
2) Resource Rooms. Rooms to which special needs students go for a portion of a day's programming. Resource rooms are usually staffed by a teacher who specializes in a specific area. Example:
   - Learning disabilities
   - Speech
   - Hearing, visual or physical impairments
   - Remedial reading or math

A multi-categorical room may be a resource room if it serves a variety of children on a part-time basis throughout the course of a day.

3) Therapy Rooms. Rooms specially designed or equipped to serve children with special needs. Example:

- Speech
- Physical or occupational therapy
- Adaptive physical education

4) Other. Other rooms that special education students may need are areas for:

- Daily living skills. Such rooms are equipped as kitchens, living rooms, bedrooms, etc. and permit students to learn basic skills relating to food preparation, cleaning, laundrying, money exchange, etc.
- Prevocational workshops. Specially equipped to teach job skills, crafts, building, sorting, etc.

Location. Specify the location of the special education rooms. Information will be useful in determining whether rooms are located in accessible areas and if handicapped students are integrated into the building's physical space. Use the CODE indicated at the top of Worksheet 4.

Physical Condition: Indicate whether the size, appearance, heat, light, ventilation, and acoustics of the rooms are comparable in quality to those of non-handicapped children being served in the school district. (Good acoustics, the quality of sound production and effects, is important for rooms serving the deaf, hearing impaired or communication handicapped. For example, high ceilings, hard floors, and over-sized spaces would all contribute to poor acoustics.)

Section III - ADAPTATIONS AND EQUIPMENT

Rooms serving handicapped students may need specialized equipment and/or require building modifications. Specify by name those that are present and/or those that are needed. Examples of adaptations: Ramps, wide doors, non-skid floors, handrails, special lighting, lowered fountains, fire alarms, sinks, etc. Examples of equipment: Devices for speech, hearing, occupational or physical therapy, vocational education, physical education, recreation, etc.

Section IV - GENERAL USE AREAS

Indicate under "Usage" the way in which each area is used by handicapped students. Use CODE. This information will have implications for whether the handicapped students are fully integrated into the scheduled activities of that building.

WORKSHEET 3 BUILDING VISIT/PROGRAM INFORMATION

DATE ____________

BUILDING ____________ TOTAL ENROLLMENT ____________ SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT ____________

LOCATION ____________ GRADE RANGE/LEVEL SERVED ____________

	A. SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT				B. STAFF SERVING SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS				C. STUDENT'S CLASSROOM SETTING			
					Teachers		Specialists/Aides					
	Program/ Handicap	No.	Grade/ Level	Age Range	Sp. Ed.	Regular Ed.	No. & Type	Schedule	Full Time Reg. Class	Reg. Class plus Resource Room	Full Time Sp. Class	Comb. Sp. & Reg.
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
TOTAL	☒		☒	☒				☒				

Extra Curricular activities?

Joint or separate lunch hours and recess?

Comments?

WORKSHEET 4 BUILDING VISIT/ PHYSICAL FACILITIES

Date ____________________

Building ____________________
Location ____________________
Age of Building ____________________
Total No. Classrooms ____________________

Total No. Handicapped Served in Building ________
No. ____ Non-ambulatory No.____ Visually disabled
No. ____ Semi-ambulatory No.____ Hearing Disabled

Code

Location
B,1,2,3 - Floor on which room is located
S - Separate wing or unit

Usage
S - Available to special education students, but for separately scheduled use only
J - Available for jointly scheduled use by regular and special education students
N - Present, but not available for use by special education students

Overall Physical Condition
P - Poor
A - Adequate
X - Excellent

I. REGULAR EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

Number	Location	Overall Physical Condition				
		Size	Maintenance	Appearance	Heat, Light, Ventilation	Acoustics

II. SPECIAL EDUCATION ROOMS

Type and Number	Location	Physical Condition of Each			
		Size	Maintenance, Appearance	Heat, Lighting, Ventilation	Acoustics
Classrooms:					
Resource:					
Therapy:					
Other:					

III. ADAPTATIONS AND EQUIPMENT

Physically Disabled	Visually Disabled	Hearing Disabled

IV. GENERAL USE AREAS

Type	Usage	Type	Usage	Type	Usage
Entrance		Locker room		Home ec. room	
Hallways		Swimming pool		Wood (shop)	
Restrooms		Auditorium		Playground	
Offices		Music room		Science lab	
Cafeteria		Art room		Library	
Gym		Other			

SECTION 3

COLLECTING INFORMATION FROM PARENTS

SECTION 3

COLLECTING INFORMATION FROM PARENTS

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TOOL—Worksheet 5: Checklist for Reviewing Your Child's IEP

TOOL—Worksheet 6: Checklist for Reviewing Your Child's Records

Discussion Guide: Information From Parents And Teachers

One very good way to collect information from both parents and teachers about local special education strengths and needs is to sponsor a group discussion. A public meeting of some kind gives parents an opportunity to share aloud their concerns for their children—something parents love to do. It also gives your study team a chance to have direct input from both special and regular education teachers.

An effective way to get teachers involved is to ask as many parents as possible to bring their child's teacher. If you can get a teacher or other school person to help you sponsor the meeting, work the process in reverse. Ask the teachers to bring with them several parents of children they teach.

Invite regular as well as special educators and members of community groups interested in the handicapped.

Explain that the purpose of the discussion will be to find out:

- How much knowledge parents have about special education
- What the areas of concern are in the local special education program

The meeting may also be an opportunity for your team to recruit parents who are willing to share detailed information about their child's program by filling out the Parent Interview form and Worksheets 5 and 6.

METHOD OF CONDUCTING THE GROUP DISCUSSION

1) Choose eight persons, if possible four parents and four teachers, who will be willing to act as discussion leaders and recorders.
2) Divide the participants into four groups. Assign each group one discussion leader and one recorder.
    a) Discussion leaders will introduce each topic on the Discussion Guide for comment. (See Appendix for ideas on leading discussions.)
    b) Recorders will make note of all comments.
3) Spend approximately 20 minutes on each of the four topics.

Discussion Guide

For use by group leaders at a parent and teacher discussion about local special education.

Purposes of Discussion:

1) To find out how much knowledge parents have about special education.
2) To find out where the areas of concern are in the local special education programs.

TOPIC 1: THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS

TIME FRAME: 20 minutes of discussion

FOCUS: How much is known about the steps to be taken to secure a good education for a handicapped child?
Are there any problems locally in this process?

How much is known about/are there any problems with:

A. Identification of Children with Suspected Needs

   1) The public school's responsibility to find children?

      a) Contacts with doctors, preschools, agencies
      b) Publicity
      c) Screening programs for vision, speech, hearing, etc.
      d) Ability of regular teachers to identify problems

   2) The ways in which children are referred for an evaluation?

B. Complete Evaluation of Child

   1) What makes an evaluation thorough?

      a) Types of tests (achievement, IQ, personality, behavior, social interaction, perception, motor skills, brain function)
      b) Observation

   2) The school's policy and procedure for evaluation?

      a) Timelines and personnel
      b) Use of non-school specialists

   3) Parent involvement in the evaluation process?

      a) Notification and consent
      b) Right to share

C. The Individualized Education Plan

1) What constitutes a good IEP meeting?

a) Participants
b) Objectives

2) A Good IEP?

a) Description of child's present learning level
b) Goals and objectives for child
c) Programs and services to be provided
d) How progress will be measured

D. Placement into a Special Education Program

1) The case conference committee?

2) The evaluation team?

3) The role of the parent?

4) Proper placement procedures?

a) Timelines
b) Fitting the program to the child

TOPIC 2: THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

TIME FRAME: 20 minutes of discussion

FOCUS: How much is known about the educational programs and related services offered by a special education district? What are the district's strengths and weaknesses?

How much is known about/are there any problems with:

A. Programs for Children with the Various Handicapping Conditions

1) Which programs are offered?

a) Communication Hc (articulation, fluency, voice, language)
b) Emotionally Hc (serious behavior problems, schizophrenic, autistic, but not socially maladjusted)
c) Hearing Impaired (deaf, hard of hearing)
d) Mentally Hc (severely profoundly, moderately, mildly)
e) Physically Hc (orthopedically impaired, health impaired)
f) Learning Disabled (perceptual problems, brain injury)
g) Visually Hc (blind, partially seeing)
h) Multiply Hc (combined disabilities)

2) The education related services offered?

—— Speech
—— Audiology
—— Occupational therapy
—— Physical therapy
—— Counseling
—— Behavior modification
—— Routine testing
—— Medical/educational evaluation
—— Regular transportation
—— Special transportation
—— Health services of school nurse
—— Parent education
—— Regular phys. ed.
—— Adaptive phys. ed.
—— Art
—— Music
—— Home economics
—— Consumer education
—— Industrial arts
—— Vocational education
—— Career counseling
—— Sex education
—— Drivers education
—— Age 18-21 program
—— Summer school
—— Work experience

3) The quality of the students' programs and classroom settings?

- a) Appropriateness and lack of restriction
- b) Class size, age range
- c) Use of regular education services
- d) Settings: self-contained, resource rooms, etc.

TOPIC 3: EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS

TIME FRAME: 20 minutes of discussion

FOCUS: How much is known about the handicapped student's right to an appropriate education in the most normal setting?
How much is known about the rights and responsibilities of the parent?
Are there any problems locally with these areas?

How much is known about/are there any problems with:

A. The Least Restrictive Environment and Accessibility

1) A good school setting for a disabled child?

- a) Integrated as much as possible
- b) Appropriate to learning level

2) Involvement of students in school activities?

- a) Lunch, recess, etc.
- b) Extracurricular activities

3) Physically accessible buildings?

- a) Individualized accommodations for the handicapped student
- b) Appropriate construction or adaptation
- c) Appropriate scheduling and space utilization

B. Parent and Child Rights

1) The rights of parental involvement in the education of children?
   - a) Notification prior to proposed step or change
   - b) Right to consent prior to evaluation and placement
   - c) Assigning educational advocates (surrogate parents)

2) The right to confidentiality of records?

3) The right of access by parents to records?

4) The complaint, hearing and appeals procedures available to parents?

TOPIC 4: ADMINISTRATION OF LOCAL SPECIAL EDUCATION

TIME FRAME: 20 minutes of discussion

FOCUS: How much is known about the organization of the local special education district?
What are the district's strengths and weaknesses?

How much is known about/are there any problems with:

A. Organization and Coordination of Services

1) How the delivery of special education services are organized?

2) The working relationship between school departments or member districts?

3) The existence of written policies and uniform procedures?

B. Communication

1) With state and federal levels?

2) Between administrators and staff?

3) With advisory boards?

C. Personnel

1) The quality of the teaching and support staff?

2) In-service training?

3) Employment policies?

D. Budget and Finance

1) How priorities are set for special education?
   - a) Planning
   - b) Budget requests

2) The budgeting process?
   - a) Sources of income
   - b) Utilization of funds

Parent Interview: Collecting Information From Parents

Determine how many parents you want to interview. Try to interview parents who will provide information on different areas of the program. This might include parents:

- From different geographic areas (in the case of a cooperative).
- With children having various handicaps.
- Whose children attend different school buildings.

Your study group will need to discuss the best way to reach an adequate sample of parents. Here are some possibilities:

1) Meeting. Use Group Discussion Meeting (see page 32) as an opportunity to recruit willing parents and to convey background information. Give the form to the parents to fill out, working at their own pace. The Parent Interview form may be filled out at the meeting (allow a good hour) or may be given to parents to take home and return to the collector at a later specified date.
2) Mailing. Parent interview forms may be mailed to a well-researched mailing list. The cost of a mailing will be high and the return low, however. In addition, securing a well-balanced mailing list may be difficult.
3) Cosponsorship with the School. Ask the principals of the various schools where handicapped students are served to send them home with the children.
4) Use of Local Parent Meetings. Parent group meetings such as local chapters of ACLD (Association of Children with Learning Disabilities) or ARC (Association of Retarded Citizens) may be a good source of parent participants. Also consider building PTO and PTA meetings.

If you plan to interview a large sample of parents, recruit other parents to help you pass out and collect the Parent Interview forms.

After all the forms have been collected, use the score sheet contained in this guide to tabulate the information.

NOTE: IF YOU WISH, USE THE PARENT INTERVIEW FORM IN CONJUNCTION WITH WORKSHEET 5: CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING YOUR CHILD'S IEP and WORKSHEET 6: CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING YOUR CHILD'S RECORDS.

For analysis, Compare sections I through VI of the Parent Interview form with the six assessment areas of the ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST in Section 4 of this guide.

Interview: Parent Of A Student Enrolled In Special Education

Attached is a series of questions designed to give a picture of how well your local school district is doing in providing special education to your child.

Your answers will tell us how local parents feel about:

- How well the school district communicates with parents,
- The quality of local special education programs and services,
- How well the school district is doing in complying with new state and federal special education laws.

It will require about one hour of your time to complete this interview form.

Directions:

Answer each question, working at your own pace.

1) Circle Yes or No for each question that applies to your situation.
2) Circle NA if the question does not apply to you or your child.
3) For questions with number scales before them, circle one number indicating the degree to which you agree.
4) Questions that are boxed require more detailed answers. Some will require that you make choices from among answers given. Others ask for written comments. Answer each.

Return this form by ______________________
date

Return to: ______________________________
____
____
Phone ______________________________

BACKGROUND IFNORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILD:

Child's Handicapping Condition:

—— Communication Handicapped
—— Emotionally Handicapped
—— Hearing Impaired
—— Deaf
—— Severely/Profoundly Mentally Handicapped
—— Moderately Mentally Handicapped (trainable)
—— Mildly Mentally Handicapped (educable)
—— Physically Handicapped ________________________
—— Learning Disabled
—— Visually Impaired
—— Blind
—— Multiply Handicapped ________________________
—— Other Health Impaired ________________________

When was your child's handicap diagnosed?

—— At birth
—— Between birth and age 2
—— Preschool years (age 3-5)
—— Kindergarten (age 5-6)
—— School years (age 6-18)

Child's age ________

Male or female ________

Number of children in family ________

Position of child among siblings ________

Do child's natural brothers and sisters have any handicaps? ____________

Type of community in which child's family resides:

—— Urban
—— Rural
—— Suburban

School district serving your family ________________________

Name of school child attends ________________________

Is this school your neighborhood school? ________

Is this school in another district? ________

Describe the school program to which child is assigned. ____________

____

____

____

Program Level:

- —— Preschool
- —— Kindergarten
- —— Primary
- —— Intermediate
- —— Junior High
- —— Secondary

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT YOU:

Your relation to the child:

- —— Mother
- —— Father
- —— foster parent
- —— surrogate parent

How long have you known the child? ____________

- —— other ______________________________

What level of education have you completed?

Grade 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 College 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

AREA I: THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF YOUR LOCAL SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Very Well				Poor	
5	4	3	2	1	1. How well do you feel you understand the organization of your local school district's department of special education?
5	4	3	2	1	2. How well organized do you feel the local special education programs are?
5	4	3	2	1	3. How well do you feel that the special education teachers do their jobs?
5	4	3	2	1	4. How well aware do you feel the regular education teachers are of the district's special education policies and procedures?
					5. How well do you think the following departments of your school district work with the special education department to serve handicapped children?
5	4	3	2	1	a. Regular education administration
5	4	3	2	1	b. Transportation
5	4	3	2	1	c. Testing and evaluation
5	4	3	2	1	d. Regular education specialities (art, music, vocational education, etc.)
5	4	3	2	1	e. Guidance and counseling
5	4	3	2	1	6. How well do you feel the school district funds special education programs?

7. In addition to your child's teacher and principal, have you ever dealt with any of the following school persons?

—— School Board
—— Superintendent
—— Director of Special Education
—— A supervisor in the special education department
—— Director of Pupil Personnel Services
—— Director of Finances
—— Director of Testing and Evaluation
—— Director of Transportation
—— None

8. What were the discussions about? Check all that apply.

—— My own child's special education program
—— Other special education issues
—— General education issues
—— Other ____________________

Very Well Poor	
5 4 3 2 1	9. How well do you feel the school district communicates with parents?

AREA II: IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF YOUR CHILD

Yes No	1. Have you seen notices in newspapers or elsewhere encouraging the community to refer handicapped children to the schools for help with learning needs?
	2. What kinds of school-sponsored screening programs has your child taken part in? (Note: Screenings are simple tests routinely scheduled for all children of a given age throughout the district.) —— Readiness for kindergarten —— Hearing —— Vision —— Speech —— Motor coordination —— Other ____________________ —— None that I'm aware of

BEFORE YOU ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, PLEASE INDICATE:

—— I will be referring to the very first evaluation given by the school before my child was placed into a special education program. Year 19____.

—— I will be referring to the most recent evaluation given by the school to my child. Year 19____.

Very Well Poor	
5 4 3 2 1	3. Before your child was tested, how well do you feel the school explained to you what an evaluation would include - the kinds of tests, who would do the testing, and so on?
5 4 3 2 1	4. After your child was evaluated, how well do you feel the results were explained to you?
5 4 3 2 1	5. How well do you feel the knowledge you have about your child (medical background, learning level, personality, etc.) was given consideration?
5 4 3 2 1	6. How well qualified do you feel that the school testers were, considering your child's handicapping condition?

A Great Deal Very Little	7. Do you feel that enough tests and observations were made in the following areas:
5 4 3 2 1	a. Learning potential (intelligence or aptitude)
5 4 3 2 1	b. Achievement (what has been learned so far)
5 4 3 2 1	c. Adaptive behavior (ability to deal with surroundings)
5 4 3 2 1	d. Special diagnostic areas (speech, motor, hearing, vision)
5 4 3 2 1	e. Social interaction (getting along with others)
5 4 3 2 1 NA	f. Vocational aptitude (ability to perform job skills)
Very Well Poor	
5 4 3 2 1	8. How well do you think the tests were adapted to fit your child's way of communicating? (For example, if your child cannot speak, were tests used that do not require speech?)
5 4 3 2 1	9. How well do you think the tests accurately measured what your child can do?
Yes No	10. Did you sign a form giving the school permission to evaluate your child?
Yes No	11. Did you know that you could withdraw your permission at any time?
Yes No	12. Was an evaluation given within 40 school days (Indiana timelines) after the request for testing was made?
	13. Who made up the school evaluation team? (For example, psychometrist, speech therapist, doctor, psychologist, physical therapist, teacher, etc.)

School persons	Non-school specialists
1. ____________________	1. ____________________
2. ____________________	2. ____________________
3. ____________________	3. ____________________

Yes No NA	14. If it was agreed that non-school specialists would test your child, did the school pay for it?
Yes No NA	15. Did you have any test results from your own sources that you wanted the school evaluation team to consider as well?
Yes No NA	16. Did the team use the above test results?

Yes No NA 17. Do you feel that the safeguards protecting you and your child during the evaluation process were overlooked by the school?

NA 18. In what way(s) were your rights overlooked?

—— My child was identified as a special education student without my knowledge.
—— My child was tested by the school without my written permission.
—— My request that the school retest my child was denied.
—— Evaluation methods were not adapted to my child's handicapping condition.
—— The school would not pay for additional non-school specialists to make my child's evaluation complete.
—— The test results I had from my own sources were not considered at the IEP meeting.
—— Other ______________________________________
____

AREA III: THE IEP MEETING

BEFORE YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS, please indicate:

—— I will be referring to the initial IEP meeting held before my child was first placed into a special education program. Year 19____.

—— I will be referring to my child's most recent IEP meeting. Year 19____.

1. Who requested the meeting to plan your child's program?

—— I requested the meeting.
—— The school requested the meeting.
—— Other ______________________________________

Yes No 2. Was the meeting to discuss your child's program planned early enough to give you time to prepare?

Yes No 3. Do you feel enough time was set aside to carefully plan your child's program?

Yes No 4. Did you invite, or ask the school to invite, a specific person?

5. In addition to yourself, who attended the IEP meeting?

School persons	Non-school persons
1. ____________________	1. ____________________
2. ____________________	2. ____________________
3. ____________________	3. ____________________

Yes No NA	6. If this was your child's first IEP meeting (before he or she was first placed into a public special education program), was at least one person who evaluated your child present?
Yes No	7. Was the IEP meeting held within 40 school days (Indiana timelines) after the request for an evaluation was made?
Yes No	8. Was a written report made of the IEP meeting?
Yes No NA	9. If there was disagreement, were the differing opinions put into the written report?
Yes No	10. Was a copy of the IEP available to you?
Yes No	11. Was it explained to you that you could request a new IEP meeting or case review at any time?
Very Well Poor 5 4 3 2 1	12. How well did you understand how an IEP was to be developed?
	13. How did you learn about the IEP process? —— From school persons at the time of the meeting —— From a written hand-out provided by the school —— From a school-sponsored training session —— On my own, from non-school sources
	14. How well do you feel the IEP
5 4 3 2 1	a. described your child's abilities and needs?
5 4 3 2 1	b. included annual goals that fit your child's abilities and needs?
5 4 3 2 1	c. spelled out methods for measuring your child's progress?
5 4 3 2 1	d. spelled out the degree of involvement in regular education programs and activities?
	15. How were you made aware of the school's decision on your child's placement? Check all that apply. —— At the IEP meeting. —— By letter shortly after the meeting (within 10 school days in Indiana). —— On my child's first day of school. —— Other ______________________________
Yes No	16. Do you use your child's IEP to measure his or her school progress?

	17. How frequently do you discuss your child's progress with his or her teacher? ____________
Yes No	18. Is your child's program studied at least once a year at an annual case review?
Very Well Poor	
	19. What were your feelings about the development of your child's IEP?
5 4 3 2 1	a. I felt like a fully participating member of the planning team.
5 4 3 2 1	b. The IEP developed fits my child's educational needs.
5 4 3 2 1	c. The IEP is complete.

AREA IV: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RELATED SERVICES

Very Well Poor	
5 4 3 2 1	1. How well do you feel that the school explained your right to help choose your child's program?
5 4 3 2 1	2. How well do you feel that all possible options for your child's program were discussed?
5 4 3 2 1	3. How well did you feel you understood the proposed program before your child was placed into it?
Yes No	4. Did you sign a form giving permission to place your child into a new or changed special education program?

5. Does you child currently receive any of the following programs or services from the school? Check all that apply.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS

—— Regular school program
—— Learning disabilities program
—— Program for deaf and hearing impaired
—— Program for blind and visually impaired
—— Program for mentally handicapped
—— Program for emotionally disturbed
—— Program for the physically handicapped
—— Other ____________________________________

EDUCATION-RELATED SERVICES

—— Speech
—— Audiology
—— Occupational therapy
—— Physical therapy
—— Counseling
—— Behavior modification
—— Routine testing
—— Medical/educational evaluation
—— Regular transportation
—— Special transportation
—— Health services of school nurse
—— Parent education
—— Regular Phys. Ed.
—— Adaptive Phys. Ed.

—— Art
—— Music
—— Home economics
—— Consumer education
—— Industrial arts
—— Vocational education
—— Career counseling
—— Sex education
—— Drivers education
—— Age 18-21 program
—— Summer school
—— Work experience
—— Other ______________
____
—— None

6. Look at the above list again. Mark an "N" before those you feel your child needs to receive from the school, that are not now being provided.

7. Look again at the programs and services listed in item 5 above. Circle any programs or services you pay for yourself, but feel the school should provide.

8. How does your handicapped child travel to and from school?

—— School bus with regular education students
—— School bus for special education students only
—— Specially equipped van or bus
—— Private car or taxi with costs paid by school
—— Private car with costs paid by me
—— Public bus
—— By foot
—— None required

	9. How much times does your child spend on a one-way trip to or from school?
Very Well Poor 5 4 3 2 1	10. How well do you feel the size of your child's class allows the teacher to work effectively with each student?
	11. How well do you feel the students are grouped in your child's class? (Note: Children can be grouped according to age and/or similar ability.)
	12. How well do you feel the following needs of your child are being met by his or her school program?
5 4 3 2 1	a. The need to learn daily living skills.
5 4 3 2 1	b. The need to learn academic skills.
5 4 3 2 1	c. The need to have his or her health safeguarded.
5 4 3 2 1	d. The need to be involved in the regular activities of children.
Strongly Agree Dis-Agree	13. What are your feelings about how the programs and services offered to your child were chosen?
5 4 3 2 1	a. My child's schooling was determined by his or her educational needs.
5 4 3 2 1	b. My child's schooling was determined by what was available in the school system.
Yes No	14. Do you feel that any safeguards protecting you and your child in the placement process were overlooked by the school?
NA	15. In what way(s) were your rights overlooked? Check all that apply:
	—— My child was assigned to a special education program without my written permission.
	—— My child's program was changed without my written permission.
	—— No action was taken when I requested a change in program.
	—— The appropriate program or related services was not available.
	—— Other ____________________________

AREA V: EDUCATIONAL SETTING

1. In what kind of classroom testing is your child educated?

—— Regular classroom with no special help
—— Regular classroom with help by specialists or aides
—— Regular classroom with visits to a resource room
—— Special education classroom full time
—— Combination regular and special education classes
—— "Diagnostic" classroom - full or part time
—— At home, by tutor or special telephone
—— Residential school
—— Other ______________________________

NA 2. Does you child currently receive any of the following special helps that enable him or her to be included as much as possible in a regular classroom setting? Check all that apply.

—— Modified schedule
—— Tutor or aide
—— Special equipment
—— Specially designed room
—— Transportation between classes
—— Transportation between buildings
—— Interpreter
—— Reader
—— Notetaker
—— Other ______________________________

NA 3. Look at the above list again. Mark with an "N" any special helps you feel your child needs that could be provided him or her to take advantage of a regular classroom setting.

4. In what kind of building is your child educated?

—— His or her regular neighborhood school
—— A regular special education building
—— A separate special education building
—— A residential school
—— Home or hospital
—— Other ______________________________

5. Is your child's school building adapted to allow him or her to move freely from place to place?

6. Does your school have a separate wing or floor for education classrooms?

			7. Are the following general use areas available to your child?
Yes	No		Restrooms
Yes	No		Cafeteria
Yes	No		Playground
Yes	No		Gym, auditorium
Yes	No	NA	Locker rooms
Yes	No	NA	Swimming pool
Yes	No		Music
Yes	No		Art room
Yes	No		Library
Yes	No	NA	Labs, Home Ec room, Shop
Yes	No		Other ______________________________
			8. Are the following daily school routines of your child similar to the routines of regular education students?
Yes	No		a. Meals
Yes	No	NA	b. Recess
Yes	No	NA	c. Arrival and departure
Yes	No	NA	d. Length of school day
Yes	No		e. Length of school year
Yes	No		f. Other ______________________________
			9. Are any of the following extra-curricular activities available to your child?
			—— Field trips —— Clubs —— School assemblies —— Athletics —— Regularly scheduled recreation (activity days, dances, etc.) —— None
			10. Look at the above list again. Mark with an "N" those activities you feel your child needs to have available to him or her that are not now being provided.

Yes No	11. Do you feel that any rights your child has to as normal a school setting as possible are being overlooked by the school?
NA	12. In what way(s) are his or her rights overlooked? Check all that apply. —— The building in which my child is placed is unnecessarily separate. —— The classroom in which my child is placed is unnecessarily separate. —— My child's program does not include enough regular education activities. —— The programs and buildings necessary to my child's education are not physically accessible. —— Other ______________________________ ______________________________

AREA VI: PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR THE STUDENT AND PARENT

Yes No	1. Has the school given you an explanation of your parental rights in the educational process?
	2. How were your rights shared with you? Check all that apply. —— By means of a written handout or booklet —— At special meetings for parents —— At each school conference or IEP meeting —— Other ______________________________
Very Clear Very Unclear 5 4 3 2 1	3. How clear do you feel the school's explanation of your rights has been?
Yes No	4. Have you ever asked to see your child's school records?
Yes No NA	5. Did the school comply with your request within a reasonable amount of time (in no case later than 45 days)?
Yes No NA	6. Was someone available to answer questions you had about the information in the records?
Yes No NA	7. Were all your child's school records easy to locate?
Yes No NA	8. If you asked for copies of the records, was there a charge?
NA	9. What was the charge for a copy?

Yes No NA	10. Have you ever asked that any information be removed or changed from your child's records?
NA	11. What information did you want removed or changed? —— Inaccurate or misleading statements —— Labels that could be detrimental to my child's future —— Personal impressions by teachers —— Outdated or wrong test results
Yes No	12. Have you ever been asked for your permission before information about your child was shown to anyone other than an approved school person?
Very Well Poor 5 4 3 2 1	13. How well do you feel the teacher uses the records to learn about and better teach your child?
Yes No	14. Do you feel that any rights you or your child have regarding confidentiality and access to records have been overlooked by the school?
NA	15. In what way(s) are your child's or your rights overlooked? Check all that apply. —— My right to see and examine my child's school records was (circle one) denied / made unduly difficult —— My request to remove or correct misleading or inaccurate information on records was denied. —— My request to attach a statement of explanation to misleading or inaccurate records was denied. —— The confidentiality of my child's records was not respected.
Yes No	16. Have you ever written a formal letter of complaint to resolve a school problem?
NA	17. To whom was the letter written? —— School Board —— Superintendent —— State Division of Special Education —— Other ______________________________
NA	18. What was the issue?
Yes No NA	19. Have you ever requested a due process hearing?
NA	20. What was the issue?

		NA	21. What were the results of the hearing?
Yes	No		22. Do you feel that any rights you had in the complaint or hearing process were overlooked by the school?
		NA	23. In what way(s) has this happened? Check all that apply. —— My formal complaint was not responded to. —— The school did not give me a clear description of my rights in the complaint or hearing process. —— The hearing officer at my due process hearing was not impartial. —— Specific procedural safeguards were not followed at my hearing. —— Other ____________________
Yes	No		24. Are you presently considering either making a formal complaint or requesting a due process hearing?
		NA	25. What is the issue you hope the complaint or hearing will resolve?

Tally Sheet For Tabulating Results

To compile results from the Parent Interview Forms fill in the total number of responses for each category.

Child's Handicapping Condition

________ Communication Handicapped
________ Emotionally Handicapped
________ Hearing Impaired
________ Deaf
________ Severely/Profoundly Mentally Handicapped
________ Moderately Mentally Handicapped (trainable)
________ Mildly Mentally Handicapped (educable)
________ Physically Handicapped ________________
________ Learning Disabled
________ Visually Impaired
________ Blind
________ Multiply Handicapped ________________
________ Other Health Impaired ________________

Child's Program Level

________ Preschool
________ Kindergarten
________ Primary
________ Intermediate
________ Junior High
________ Secondary

AREA I: THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF YOUR LOCAL SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Parent Knowledge	1.	________ 5	________ 4	________ 3	________ 2	________ 1
Quality/System	2.	________ 5	________ 4	________ 3	________ 2	________ 1
Quality/Staff	3.	________ 5	________ 4	________ 3	________ 2	________ 1
	4.	________ 5	________ 4	________ 3	________ 2	________ 1

Quality/System	5a.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
	5b.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
	5c.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
	5d.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
	5e.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
	6.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1

Parent Involvement

7. ____ School Board
____ Superintendent
____ Director of Special Education
____ A supervisor in the special education department
____ Director of Pupil Personnel Services
____ Director of Finances
____ Director of Testing and Evaluation
____ Director of Transportation
____ None

8. ____ My own child's special education program
____ Other special education issues
____ General education issues
____ Other

Quality/Communication	9.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1

AREA II: IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF YOUR CHILD

Quality/Communication 1. ____ Yes ____ No

Quality/Testing 2.
________ Readiness for kindergarten
________ Hearing
________ Vision
________ Speech
________ Motor coordination
________ Other
________ None that I'm aware of

Quality/Communication	3.	5	4	3	2	1	
	4.	5	4	3	2	1	
	5.	5	4	3	2	1	
Quality/Staff	6.	5	4	3	2	1	
Quality/Testing	7a.	5	4	3	2	1	
	7b.	5	4	3	2	1	
	7c.	5	4	3	2	1	
	7d.	5	4	3	2	1	
	7e.	5	4	3	2	1	
	7f.	5	4	3	2	1	NA
	8.	5	4	3	2	1	
	9.	5	4	3	2	1	

School Sensitivity to Rights 10. ________ Yes ________ No

Parent Knowledge 11. ________ Yes ________ No

Quality/Testing	12.	________ Yes ________ No
	13.	________ ____________________ ________ ____________________ ________ ____________________ ________ ____________________
	14.	________ Yes ________ No
Parent Involvement	15.	________ Yes ________ No
Quality/Testing	16.	________ Yes ________ No
School Sensitivity to Rights	17.	________ Yes ________ No
	18.	________ Child was identified without my knowledge. ________ Child was tested without my written permission. ________ My request for retest was denied. ________ Evaluation methods were not adapted. ________ The school would not pay for additional non-school testing. ________ The test results I had from my own sources were not considered. ________ Other
AREA III: THE IEP MEETING		
Parent Involvement	1.	________ I requested the meeting. ________ The school requested the meeting. ________ Other

Qality/IEP Process	2.	______ Yes ______ No
	3.	______ Yes ______ No
Parent Involvement	4.	______ Yes ______ No
Quality/IEP Process	5.	______ ____________________ ______ ____________________ ______ ____________________ ______ ____________________ ______ ____________________ ______ ____________________
	6.	______ Yes ______ No
	7.	______ Yes ______ No
	8.	______ Yes ______ No
Quality/Communication	9.	______ Yes ______ No
	10.	______ Yes ______ No
	11.	______ Yes ______ No
Parent Knowledge	12.	______ 5 ______ 4 ______ 3 ______ 2 ______ 1
Quality/Communication	13.	______ From school persons at the time of the meeting ______ From a written handout provided by the school ______ From a school-sponsored training session ______ On my own, from non-school sources

Quality/Written IEP	14a.	5	4	3	2	1
	14b.	5	4	3	2	1
	14c.	5	4	3	2	1
	14d.	5	4	3	2	1

Quality/Communication 15.

- ______ At the IEP meeting
- ______ By letter shortly after the meeting
- ______ On my child's first day of school

Parent Involvement 16. ______ Yes ______ No

17. ______ ______________________________

______ ______________________________

______ ______________________________

______ ______________________________

Quality/IEP Process 18. ______ Yes ______ No

Quality/Written IEP	19a.	5	4	3	2	1
	19b.	5	4	3	2	1
	19c.	5	4	3	2	1

AREA IV: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RELATED SERVICES

Quality/Communication	1.	5	4	3	2	1
	2.	5	4	3	2	1
Parent Knowledge	3.	5	4	3	2	1

School Sensitivity
to Rights

4. __________ Yes __________ No

Availability/Programs
and Services

5a. School Programs

__________ Regular school program
__________ Learning disabilities program
__________ Program for deaf and hearing impaired
__________ Program for blind and visually impaired
__________ Program for mentally handicapped
__________ Program for emotionally disturbed
__________ Program for the physically handicapped
__________ Other

5b. Services

__________ Speech
__________ Audiology
__________ Occupational therapy
__________ Physical therapy
__________ Counseling
__________ Behavior modification
__________ Routine testing
__________ Medical/educational evaluation
__________ Regular transportation
__________ Special transportation
__________ Health services of school nurse
__________ Parent education
__________ Regular physical education
__________ Adaptive physical education
__________ Art
__________ Music
__________ Home economics
__________ Consumer education
__________ Industrial arts
__________ Vocational education
__________ Career counseling
__________ Sex education
__________ Drivers education
__________ Age 18-21 program
__________ Summer school
__________ Work experience
__________ Other

__________ None

Program Needs

6. ________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

7. ________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

Transportation

8. ________ School bus with regular education students

________ School bus for special education students only

________ Specially equipped van or bus

________ Private car or taxi with costs paid by school

________ Private care with costs paid by me

________ Public bus

________ By foot

________ None required

9. ________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

Quality/Child's Program

10.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
11.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
12a.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
12b.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
12c.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
12d.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
13a.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1
13b.	____ 5	____ 4	____ 3	____ 2	____ 1

School Sensitivity to Rights

14. ______ Yes ______ No

15. ______ My child was assigned to a special education program without my written permission.
______ My child's program was changed without my written permission.
______ No action was taken when I requested a change in program.
______ The appropriate program or related services was not available.
______ Other

AREA V: EDUCATIONAL SETTING

Integration/ Accommodations

1. ______ Regular classroom with no special help
______ Regular classroom with help by specialists or aides
______ Regular classroom with visits to a resource room
______ Special education classroom full time
______ Combination regular and special education classes
______ "Diagnostic" classroom - full or part time
______ At home, by tutor or special telephone
______ Residential school
______ Other

2. ______ Modified schedule
______ Tutor or aide
______ Special equipment
______ Specially designed room
______ Transportation between classes
______ Transportation between buildings
______ Interpreter
______ Reader
______ Notetaker
______ Other

Program Needs

3. ________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

Facilities

4. ________ Regular neighborhood school

________ A regular school not in our neighborhood

________ A separate special education building

________ A residential school

________ Home or hospital

________ Other

5. ________ Yes ________ No

6. ________ Yes ________ No ________ NA

7.

Yes	No	NA	
________	________	________	Restrooms
________	________	________	Cafeteria
________	________	________	Playground
________	________	________	Gym, auditorium
________	________	________	Locker rooms
________	________	________	Swimming pool
________	________	________	Music
________	________	________	Art room
________	________	________	Library
________	________	________	Labs, Home ec room, shop
________	________	________	Other

Integration/
Accommodations

8.

Yes	No	NA	
______	______	______	Meals
______	______	______	Recess
______	______	______	Arrival and departure
______	______	______	Length of school day
______	______	______	Length of school year
______	______	______	Other

9. ______ Field trips
______ Clubs
______ School assemblies
______ Athletics
______ Regularly scheduled recreation
______ None

Program Needs

10. ______ ______________________________
______ ______________________________
______ ______________________________
______ ______________________________

School Sensitivity
to Rights

11. __________ Yes __________ No

12. ______ The building in which my child is placed is unnecessarily separate.
______ The classroom in which my child is placed is unnecessarily separate.
______ My child's program does not include enough regular education activities.
______ The programs and buildings necessary to my child's education are not physically accessible.
______ Other

VI: PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR THE STUDENT AND PARENT

Quality/Communication

1. ________ Yes ________ No

2. ________ By means of a written handout or booklet
________ At special meetings for parents
________ At each school conference or IEP meeting
________ Other

3. ________ 5 ________ 4 ________ 3 ________ 2 ________ 1

Parent Involvement

4. ________ Yes ________ No

Records/Access

5. ________ Yes ________ No

Quality/Communication

6. ________ Yes ________ No

Records/Access

7. ________ Yes ________ No

8. ________ Yes ________ No

9. ________ ____________________
________ ____________________
________ ____________________

Records/Accuracy

10. ________ Yes ________ No ________ NA

11. ________ Inaccurate or misleading statements
________ Labels that could be detrimental to my child's future
________ Personal impressions by teachers
________ Outdated or wrong test results

Records/Access

12. ________ Yes ________ No

Quality/Staff	13.	______ 5	______ 4	______ 3	______ 2	______ 1

School Sensitivity to Rights

14. ________ Yes ________ No

15. ________ My right to see and examine my child's records was (circle one)
denied / made unduly difficult.

________ My request to remove or correct misleading or inaccurate information on records was denied.

________ My request to attach a statement or explanation to misleading or inaccurate records was denied.

________ The confidentiality of my child's records was not respected.

Formal Complaints

16. ________ Yes ________ No

17. ________ School Board

________ Superintendent

________ State Division of Special Education

________ Other

18. ________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

Hearings

19. ________ Yes ________ No

20. ________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

21. ________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

________ ______________________________

School Sensitivity to Rights

22. __________ Yes __________ No

23. __________ My formal complaint was not responded to.

__________ The school did not give me a clear description of my rights in the complaint or hearing process.

__________ The hearing officer at my due process hearing was not impartial.

__________ Specific procedural safeguards were not followed at my hearing.

__________ Other

Possible Complaints/Hearings

24. __________ Yes __________ No

25. __________ ______________________________

__________ ______________________________

__________ ______________________________

__________ ______________________________

Worksheets 5&6: IEP And Records Check By Parents

Use the same sample of parents who are willing to fill out the Parent Interview form to also provide your study group with information about individualized education programs (IEPs) and student records. These should be parents whose children represent a variety of grade levels, teachers, buildings, and handicapping conditions.

Undertaking an IEP and records check will require that the parents be willing to review the record folders and IEPs of their own school-age children.

WORKSHEET 5: CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING YOUR CHILD'S IEP

The parents may wish to either share their children's IEPs with you or review the IEPs themselves, using the Worksheet as a guide.

Worksheet 5 deals only with the written contents of an IEP. In order to secure information about the IEP meeting, degree of parental involvement, success of the program, etc. the parent will need to complete the Parent Interview form.

The quality of a child's IEP reflects in many ways the quality of local special education programming. This study will help your team determine whether IEPs are present in a complete and usable form for each handicapped student.

WORKSHEET 6: CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING YOUR CHILD'S RECORDS

Ask the same parents to examine their child's record folder. Each parent will first need to contact the school principal in order to find out exactly where the student's complete school records are stored. Ideally all records should be kept in one location and be easily available to the child's teachers.

Each parent should then visit the school and examine the record folder, using the guidelines on the Checklist for Reviewing Records.

By reviewing individual records, your group will be able to learn:

- Whether or not parents can easily obtain access to their children's records.
- If the appropriate information, consent forms, and test results are included.
- If the confidentiality of student and family information is honored.
- If there is evidence that the records are being utilized by the teaching staff.

Date ____________________

WORKSHEET 5

CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING YOUR CHILD'S IEP

DIRECTIONS:

Respond to each item with Yes, No, or NA (Not Applicable)

Child's
Age ______________ Grade/level ____________
Handicapping Condition ____________________
School ____________________________________

WERE THE FOLLOWING PORTIONS OF YOUR CHILD'S IEP FORM THOROUGHLY FILLED IN?

☐ DESCRIPTION OF CHILD'S PRESENT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE
______ Self-help and daily living skills
______ Academic and learning level
______ Physical abilities
______ Social behaviors
______ Pre-vocational (job-related) skills
______ Reference to recent tests
______ My child is described in terms of his strengths as well as needs.

☐ ANNUAL GOALS
______ Indicate what my child should be able to do by end of the school year.
______ Seem to fully meet the educational needs of my child.
______ Can be accomplished during school year.
______ Written in understandable language.

☐ SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES
______ Describe specific tasks in which my child will engage.
______ Objectives that will be given the most emphasis are indicated.
______ Written in understandable language.

☐ DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS AND DATES FOR SERVICES
______ Indicates program to which my child will be assigned.
______ Specifies all education-related services.
______ Specifies dates services will begin and be re-evaluated.

☐ TIME IN REGULAR SETTINGS
______ Indicates amount of time my child will spend in regular classes and other activities.

☐ EVALUATION OF CHILD'S PROGRESS
______ Describes how and when progress will be checked.
______ Indicates who is responsible.
______ Indicates how it will be reported.

WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD'S IEP? Check all that apply.

______ Based on services that fit my child's educational needs.
______ Based on school services currently available.
______ Falls short of meeting my child's needs.
______ Incomplete.
______ Written with my full involvement.
______ Written "behind the scenes" before I became involved.
______ Written, but not used by teachers.
______ Used by teachers.

WORKSHEET 6 CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING YOUR CHILD'S RECORDS

Date ______________________
Location(s) of Records __________
____

Child's Age __________ Grade/Level __________
Handicapping Condition ______________________
School ______________________________________

Indicate with "Yes" or "No"

___ Were you given prompt access to your child's records?
___ Is there a charge for making copies of records? If yes, cost: _______
___ Was someone available to answer questions about the content of the records?
___ Is a dated list maintained of persons who have had access to your child's records?
___ Were you, as a parent, asked to sign anything before given access?

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE CONTAINED IN YOUR CHILD'S RECORD FOLDER? Check all that apply. Indicate date given on each item.

	Yes	No	Dates
CUMULATIVE SCHOOL HISTORY Includes information regarding schools attended, days present, grades earned, extra activities, disciplinary actions			
REFERRAL AND EVALUATION Form referring child for testing*			
Notice of parent rights in evaluation (presented at time of referral)*			
Parental permission to evaluate			
Test results from school-given evaluations			
MEETINGS AND IEP Notices inviting parents to IEP meetings			
Summary report of initial special education placement meeting*			
Summary report of each annual review meeting			
Summary reports of other parent-school meetings			
Child's IEPs (initial IEP and yearly revisions)			
Notice to parent of proposed special education placement			
Notice of parent rights (presented at time of placement)			
Parental permission to place child in special education			
OTHER POSSIBLE ITEMS Parental permission to release records to non-school persons			
Actual tests taken by child			
Test results from non-school sources			
Copies of medical records provided by parent			
Letters from parents or teachers			
Record of telephone conversations with parent			
Progress reports			
Written description of child's history by parent			
Anecdotal records (personal impressions of child by school persons)			
Other			

*May not be included if child was placed in special education prior to October 1, 1979.

SECTION 4

ANALYZING THE COLLECTED INFORMATION

SECTION 4

ANALYZING THE COLLECTED INFORMATION

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Organizing Your Data And Using The Assessment Checklist For Analysis

ORGANIZATION

After completing the information-gathering stage of the assessment process, your group will need to organize the data collected prior to its analysis.

1) Some information will be already well-organized and simple enough to use as collected by the interview or worksheet forms. Very little additional pre-analysis preparation is needed for:
    - The Interview from the Director of Special Education (may be pulled apart and sections given to study subgroups if needed)
    - The Interview on Student Evaluation
    - The Interview on Special Education Transportation
    - Worksheet 1: Education-Related Services
2) Some information will need to be tabulated and summarized on Analysis sheets. (see attached sample.) This extra step is needed for:
    - The Parent Interview form (use scoring device for tabulating information prior to summarizing on Analysis sheets)
    - Worksheet 2: Transportation Survey (tabulate by building)
    - Worksheet 3: Building Visit/Program Information
    - Worksheet 5: Checklist for Reviewing your Child's IEP
    - Worksheet 6: Checklist for Reviewing your Child's Records
3) Organize Analysis sheets according to the six assessment areas of the ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST.

THE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

The Assessment Checklist is a starting point against which to compare the special education programs in your school district. Use it in two ways:

1) As a Study Guide before beginning an assessment study.
2) As an Analysis Tool with which to examine the results of the study.

The Assessment Checklist outlines the requirements of the law and gives examples of good special education practice. Included is information from

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (PL 93-112).
- The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142).
- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (Section 513 of PL 93-380).
- Educational Amendments Act of 1974 (PL 93-380).
- Suggested Practices from a Parent/Consumer Perspective.

The checklist is divided into six assessment areas:

I. ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Gives overview of the components of an appropriate education for a handicapped child.

Outlines the school administration's obligation in guaranteeing the delivery of appropriate special education programs and services.

II. IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Treats methods of referring children into the educational process and gives information on appropriate evaluation of a student's strengths and needs.

III. THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Provides guidelines on the development and content of the IEP.

IV. PLACEMENT INTO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RELATED SERVICES

Deals with placement of students into educational programs and provision of support services.

V. EDUCATIONAL SETTING

Outlines the elements of a school setting adapted when necessary to accommodate the physical, educational, and social needs of the handicapped student.

VI. PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR THE STUDENT AND PARENT

States guarantees which parents have in the identification, evaluation, and placement process.

AN ANALYSIS SESSION

After organizing the data, set up an analysis session for your assessment study group. Plan on allowing 6 to 12 hours for discussion, drawing conclusions and writing the final report. Use the ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST as your primry tool. A suggested procedure for conducting an analysis session follows.

Of the six-member study team, there should be one leader and one recorder.

1) Review. First review briefly as a group all documents and data collected by each member. Give each person an opportunity to explain how their data collection activities progressed and where the data is complete or incomplete. Allow the group about an hour for this.

2) Small Group Analysis. Divide into two smaller groups for analysis sessions to develop summaries of the assessment areas of the ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST. Assign three assessment areas to each group. (Suggested division: Assessment Areas I, II, and VI in one group and Assessment Areas III, IV, and V in the second group.) Use the ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST as a guide, but do not rely on it so heavily that it replaces a free discussion of the local data. Focus on thoroughly digesting and drawing conclusions about the local data. Each of the two small groups should spend 2 to 4 hours on this stage of analysis.

3) Group sharing. Come together as as an entire group to review each Assessment Area and suggest additions or changes. In addition to discussing your individual groups' conclusions, use ANOTHER KIND OF ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST as a tool here to put your facts into a broader perspective. Allow about 2 to 3 hours for this phase.

4) Final Report. Summarize your findings on paper, following the points listed in the ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST. The section beginning on page 8 will give additional guidelines for the report writing phase. Writing the first draft of the final report will take 4 to 6 hours.

ASPECT

Assessing Special Education: Consumer Training

COMPARE THIS INFORMATION TO
ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST AREA NUMBER ______

____
TITLE

ANALYSIS SHEET

SOURCE OF THE INFORMATION							SUMMARIZED INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL PRACTICES	YOUR COMMENTS OR SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS
PARENT INTERVIEW	TRANSPO SURVEY	BLDG VISIT/PROGRAM	BLDG VISIT/FACILITIES	CHECKLIST FOR IEP	CHECKLIST FOR RECORDS	OTHER		

Assessment Checklist

AN OVERVIEW

* Each state is now required to provide a free appropriate public education to all handicapped children ages 3 to 18, and after September 1, 1980 to those between 18 and 21. States are not required to serve children between 3 to 5 or 18-21, if state law or a court decision prohibits it. (PL 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, paragraph 121a.300)

* A FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION is "special education and related services.... provided at public expense.... in conformity with an individualized education program." (PL 94-142/121.4)

* The educational services are "designed to meet individual educational needs of handicapped persons as adequately as the needs of non-handicapped persons are met." (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, paragraph 84.33)

In offering a free appropriate public education, each local school district:

* 1. Locates every handicapped child in the district and notifies their parents of services offered by the school system. (PL 94-142/121a.220)
* 2. Develops and implements an individualized education program for each handicapped child. (PL 94-142/121a.341-349)
* 3. Provides without charge special education programs that meet the educational needs of all handicapped school-age children residing in the district (including those in private or parochial schools). The education will be provided either directly by the local school district or by arrangement with other agencies or school districts. (PL 94-142/121a.14 and 121a.452)
* 4. Provides without charge whatever corrective or education-related support services are necessary to help a handicapped child benefit from special education, such as speech, physical and occupational therapy, testing, and counseling. (PL 94-142/121a.13).
* 5. Employs qualified teachers and specialists to provide all special education services. (PL 94-142/121a.12)

* 6. Gives special education students the same opportunities as regular education students to —

    - * a. Pursue courses of study that meet individual needs. (PL 94-142/121a.14)
    - * b. Participate in physical education courses, sports, and other recreational activities. (PL 94-142/121a.306)
    - * c. Obtain guidance, counseling, and employment placement services. (PL 94-142/121a.306)
    - * d. Pursue individual interests and personal and occupational goals. (PL 94-142/121a.227)

* 7. Educates handicapped students in school settings that are comparable in as many ways as possible to the regular student's environment. (PL 94-142/121a.550 and Section 504/84.34)

Checklist items marked with an asterisk (*) are required by federal regulations. Items without the asterisk are examples of good practice, or alternatives that meet requirements, but are not specifically required by law.

ASSESSMENT AREA I: ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. The local school district has policies and procedures that insure the effective delivery of special education services. The administrative structure for special education is well-designed and efficiently organized.

- —— 1) The unit of organization chosen (single district, cooperative, joint) permits a broad range of programs and services to be offered to the local population.
- —— 2) An administrative department for special education assumes the primary responsibility for developing programs and for disseminating information regarding the services available to handicapped children and their parents. Specifically the department provides:
  - —— a) Written policies on referral, evaluation, and placement for use by all teaching, administrative, and secretarial staff.
  - —— b) A designated person to contact for information on programs and services.
  - —— c) Appropriate forms and procedures to be used in the screening, referral, evaluation, and placement procedures.
- —— 3) The delivery of special education is the cooperative effort of all departments in the school system.
  - —— a) The special education department enters into agreements with other departments to provide services such as:
    - —— 1 Well-designed transportation.
    - —— 2 Parent counseling.
    - —— 3 Testing for evaluation purposes.
    - —— 4 The services of regular education specialists, such as art, music, and shop teachers.
    - —— 5. In - service training for regular education teachers.
  - —— b) The special education department shares in the overall program-planning and decision-making of the school district.
- —— 4) There is a designated individual who is responsible for coordinating transportation and insuring that appropriate services are provided to students with special needs.
- *—— 5) Services provided handicapped children enrolled in private or parochial schools are equitably planned and offered. (PL 94-142/121a.450-460)

B. The local school district makes available enough funds to provide the services called for in the educational plans of handicapped students.

—— 1) The special education department helps determine the district's budget priorities.

—— 2) A separate special education budget is maintained.

—— 3) All allowable state reimbursements are claimed.

—— 4) Federal funds available for special education are sought to the maximum extent.

*—— 5) The federal money received through PL 94-142 Part B is used only to supplement and increase special education programs and services. (PL 94-142/121a.182-186 and 121a.230)

—— 6) Cooperative arrangements with other districts and service providers are made whenever costs can be effectively lowered.

—— 7) Valuable programs developed with special federal or grant resources are maintained when funding ends.

—— 8) Provision is made for unexpected expenses, such as independent evaluations, private placements, or specialized transportation.

C. The school district plans its service delivery using whatever local services are available.

—— 1) The district enters into agreements with other school districts, private schools, clinics, universities, and private agencies to provide educational or education-related services whenever advantageous.

—— a) Examples of contracted services are:
——(1) School programs
——(2) Evaluation
——(3) Medical services for diagnostic purposes
——(4) Psychological services
——(5) Transportation
——(6) Therapy

*—— 2) The school is responsible for insuring programs administered by non-school agencies meet IEP and least restrictive environment requirements. (PL 94-142/121a.341 and 121a.347c)

D. The local school district uses the assistance of local, state, and federal resources in planning, offering, and evaluating special education.

—— 1) There are advisory panels made up of parents and representatives of the community.

—— 2) Communication is maintained with the state education agency in order to:

—— a) Benefit from state planning and training assistance.

—— b) Assist the state in its development of a comprehensive state plan. (PL 94-142/121a.124)

—— c) Profit from regular state program reviews of the local special education program. (PL 94-142/121a.556)

*—— 3) A local education agency application (LEA application) is submitted yearly in order to qualify for state and federal funds and to give assurances that appropriate educational services are being provided. (PL 94-142/121a.180-240)

—— 4) Parents and others are involved in the school's planning and evaluation procedures. Public participation includes:

*—— a) Public input into the local education agency application (LEA application). (PL 94-142/121a.226 and 121a.234) For example,

——(1) The draft LEA application and all related documents are available to parents and general public.

——(2) Public hearings are held.

——(3) Submitted comments are used to modify the LEA application, where appropriate.

——(4) The final LEA application is made available to parents and to the general public.

—— b) An active advisory group with parent members.

*—— c) Training for parents, volunteers, and surrogate parents that equips them with skills for effective participation in their child's educational process. (PL 94-142/121a.13 and 121a.382)

—— d) Publicized meetings where parental input is encouraged.

E. The local school district provides the special education services of qualified teachers and support persons.

*—— 1) The LEA application indicates how the local school will use the state's system of personnel development. (PL 94-142/121a.224)

*—— 2) The district employs qualified persons who meet state education agency's requirements for the area in which they provide education or related services (PL 94-142/121a.12)

*—— 3) The district provides on-going in-service training to all persons involved in special education (ie: teachers, therapists, aides, administrators. (PL 94-142/121a.382 and 121a.555)

*—— 4) Employees are encouraged to pursue professional development activities such as attendance at special education workshops and professional meetings. (121a.382)

*—— 5) Employment practices insure that qualified handicapped individuals are given the opportunity to hold staff positions. (PL 94-142/121a.150 and Section 504/84.11)

—— 6) Efforts are made to provide the staff with the materials, equipment, and administrative support services that allow them to meet their primary responsibilities.

ASSESSMENT AREA II: IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

*The local school district locates and identifies all children from birth through 21 who may need special education services and gives each child a full and individual evaluation. (PL 94-142/121a.300 and 121a.531 504/84.32 and 35)

*A. The location and identification of handicapped children is accomplished in several ways. (PL 93-380)

- —— 1) "Child Find" programs are undertaken, including:
  - —— a) Notices or articles prominently placed in local newspapers and newsletters, spot announcements on radio and TV, brochures, posters, telephone calls, and presentations before community groups.
  - —— b) Systematic contacts with hospitals, clinics and physician's offices, organizations of handicapped persons, and others.
  - —— c) When undertaking identification efforts, the school indicates:
    - ——(1) That it provides free evaluation services for any child from birth through age 21 suspected of having a handicap.
    - ——(2) That it provides a free education to all school-aged handicapped persons residing within the school district. (age varies according to state)
- —— 2) Screening programs are offered by the school where state law permits, or in cooperation with other groups. For example:
  - —— a) On-going screening programs for vision, hearing, speech, or learning difficulties.
  - —— b) Screening at certain intervals such as preschool, kindergarten, and specific grade levels.
  - —— c) Notification of parents regarding the school's scheduled screening activities.
- —— 3) All classroom teachers and principals assist in screening and referral procedures.
  - —— a) In-service training is provided on:
    - ——(1) Signs indicating which children might benefit from special education services.
    - ——(2) The services offered by the school system.
    - ——(3) The procedure for making referral.

—— b) Proper forms and information regarding referral are readily available to them.

B. The local school system has written procedures regarding referral of children for evaluation of their strengths and needs.

C. Safeguards protecting parents and students are in force throughout the evaluation process.

*—— 1) Each child referred receives an evaluation before any placement into special education is made. (PL 94-142/121a.531 and 504/84.35)

—— 2) Evaluations are scheduled as soon after a referral is made as possible. In no case are there delays that have the effect of denying a child an appropriate education.

*—— 3) Each child in a special education program is re-evaluated once every three years, or more frequently if requested by parent or teacher. (PL 94-142/121a.534)

*—— 4) The child's parents are notified before any evaluation takes place. The notice is communicated in a way understood by the parents and contains: (PL 94-142/121a.504-505)

    *——(a) A statement of the parent's rights (see Assessment Area VI for details).

    *——(b) A description of tests, procedures, and records that will be used.

    *——(c) A full description of the proposed activities.

*—— 5) Parents give written consent before the initial evaluation of a child takes place. (PL 94-142/121a.500 and 121a.504)

*—— 6) The parent who wishes may have the child's educational needs evaluated by specialists other than those employed by the school. (PL 94-142/121a.503)

*—— 7) If the parents disagree with the results of the school's evaluation of their child, they may obtain an evaluation by a qualified person not employed by the school district. (PL 94-142/121a.503

    *——(a) The school provides information to parents to help them obtain an independent evaluation.

    *——(b) Unless the school shows at a hearing that their evaluation is appropriate, the independent evaluation is paid for by the school.

*——(c) The results of an independent evaluation, whether obtained by the school or the parents, is considered in developing a special education program for the child.

*—— 8) If parents do not give their consent the school may proceed only by taking the following steps: (PL 94-142. 121a.504)

*——(a) Request a hearing to allow them to evaluate or place the child.

*——(b) Follow state law for overriding the parent's refusal if such laws exist.

*D. Evaluations are thorough and carefully designed for the individual child. (PL 94-142/121a.500)

*—— 1) The evaluation is made by a team of persons, including at least one individual specializing in the child's area of suspected disability. (PL 94-142/121a.532 and 504/84.35)

*—— 2) A wide variety of tests and diagnostic procedures are used to measure more than simply IQ. The tests cover: (PL 94-142/121a.532 and 504/84.35)

——(a) The nature and extent of the child's disability.

——(b) The child's present and potential levels of learning, social skills, and emotional development.

——(c) The child's perception and motor abilities, including speech, hearing, and vision.

*—— 3) Tests are selected and administered so that the child's abilities, and not just his or her impairments, are measured. Tests are: (PL 94-142/121a.532 and 504/84.35)

*——(a) Given by qualified persons according to the specific test instructions.

*——(b) Properly validated (i.e. they measure what they say they measure).

*——(c) Adapted to the child's manner of communication and racial or cultural background.

*—— 4) Ways of evaluating the child in addition to testing are made a part of the student evaluation process. These may include:

——(a) Observation of the child in home and school settings.

——(b) Interviews with parents and others familiar with the child.

——(c) Possible assignment to diagnostic kindergarten placements.

——(d) "Hands on" experiences for vocational testing.

E. Results of the evaluation are considered when developing a child's individualized education program.

*—— 1) Results are interpreted by a team of persons who are familiar with the child and know about evaluation procedures. (PL 94-142/121a.533 and 504/84.35)

*—— 2) Parents are fully informed of the results. (PL 94-142/121a.502 and 121a.562)

*—— 3) The evaluation team's recommendations about teaching methods, services, and necessary accommodations are considered while writing the IEP and when making the placement decision. (PL 94-142/121a.533)

ASSESSMENT AREA III: THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

*A. The local school district develops and implements an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each of its handicapped students. The IEP is a specific statement of the special education program and education-related services that an individual child will receive for one year. The IEP is developed jointly by the school and the child's parents. (PL 94-142/121a.340-49 and 504/84.32)

B. An IEP meeting must be held before each handicapped child is placed into a special education program. (PL 94-142/121a.342)

*____ 1) The meeting to develop the IEP must be held within 30 calendar days after it is determined that the child needs special educational services. (PL 94-142/121a.342)

*____ 2) An IEP meeting is attended by the following individuals: (PL 94-142/121a.344-345)

  *____ a) A qualified representative of the school's education program.

  *____ b) The child's teacher.

  *____ c) The child's parent(s) or surrogate parent. (If parents are not present, the school must have detailed documentation of phone calls, letters, home visits, and other contacts made in an effort to involve them).

  *____ d) The child, if appropriate.

  *____ e) Other individuals invited by the parent or school.

  *____ f) A member of the evaluation team or an individual familiar with the test procedures used and their results, if the child was evaluated for the first time.

*____ 3) IEP meetings are scheduled far enough in advance to allow participants time to prepare. (PL 94-142/121a.345)

*____ 4) Parents are fully informed in advance of the purpose of the meeting and understand their part in writing the IEP. (PL 94-142/121a.500)

*____ 5) A meeting to discuss and revise a child's special education program is held once a year. (PL 94-142/121a.343)

C. The IEP is written in a way that addresses the child's needs.

- *—— 1) Each IEP contains the following: (PL 94-142/121a.346)
  - *—— a) A description of the child's present level of performance.
  - *—— b) Annual goals proposed for the child.
  - *—— c) Short-term objectives or specific steps the child will take.
  - *—— d) A description of the programs and services that will be provided.
  - *—— e) The dates services will begin and be re-evaluated.
  - *—— f) When, how, and by whom the child's progress will be measured.
  - *—— g) The amount of time the child will spend in regular education activities.
- —— 2) The IEP describes the child in terms of his or her:
  - —— a) Academic and learning levels.
  - —— b) Physical abilities.
  - —— c) Social behavior.
  - —— d) Self-help skills.
- —— 3) Information provided by the parents such as medical history, physical limitations, learning style, social needs, personality, behavior, and family background is used in writing the IEP.
- —— 4) The annual goals describe the educational growth expected of the child before the end of that school year. Goals may be behavioral, self-help, and social, as well as academic, depending upon the priorities established by meeting participants.
- —— 5) The short-term objectives are written as specific steps to be taken in the child's progress toward the annual goal.
- —— 6) The proposed programs and services are developed by all meeting participants including parents.
- —— 7) The IEP may be very specific about transportation arrangements, frequency and duration of related services, and the way in which the child's progress will be measured.
- *—— 8) A copy of the IEP is given to the child's parents upon request. (PL 94-142/121a.345)

*—— 9) An IEP is on file at the beginning of the school year for each child enrolled in special education, including private school children receiving public school services. (PL 94-142/121a.347 (a) and 121a.342)

*—— 10) The IEP is implemented as soon as possible following the meeting. (PL 94-142/121a.342)

ASSESSMENT AREA IV: PLACEMENT INTO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RELATED SERVICES

A. Each handicapped child is placed in an education program that fits his or her needs, according to the IEP which has been developed.

—— 1) Children with the following handicaps are served: (PL 94-142/121a.5 and Section 504/84.3)

*—— a) Communication handicapped.

*—— b) Seriously emotionally disturbed.

*—— c) Hearing impaired.

*—— d) Multiply handicapped.

*—— e) Deaf—blind.

*—— f) Mentally handicapped (sometimes referred to as mildly, moderately, or severely/profoundly retarded).

*—— g) Physically handicapped.

*—— h) Learning disabled.

*—— i) Visually impaired and blind.

*—— j) Other health impaired (such as asthmatic, diabetic, etc.)

——2) A handicapped student is educated in a regular school environment, unless it can be demonstrated the supplementary services and aides in the regular school setting does not provide the child with an appropriate education. (PL 94-142/121a.550)

B. The placement decision is made in a way that safeguards the rights of the child and parents.

*—— 1) An IEP is written before the child is placed in special education. (PL 94-142/121a.342 and 121a.542)

*—— 2) The placement is based on the educational needs of the child, and not only upon the services currently available in the district. (PL 94-142/121a.551 and 552)

*—— 3) The placement decision is made by a group with knowledge of the child, the evaluation results, and the placement options. (PL 94-142/121a.533)

*—— 4) Before a child's special education program is begun or changed, the parents are given a written notice stating their rights and outlining the proposed placement in detail. (PL 94-142/121a.504-505) The notice:

*—— a) Contains a statement of the rights of parents. (See Assessment Area VI for more detail)

*—— b) Gives parents a full explanation of the proposed activity.

*—— c) Communicates with the parents in their usual manner of communication.

*—— d) Tells the parent that consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time. (121a.500)

*—— 5) The parent gives written consent before a child is placed into a new or changed special education program. (PL 94-142/121a.504)

*—— 6) If there is disagreement and a hearing has been requested, the child remains in his or her present placement until the issue is resolved (unless the parents and school, with the parent's consent, provides a program for the child until the placement issue is resolved. (PL 94-142/121a.513)

C. The programs accommodate the child's special needs.

—— 1) A good placement assigns the child to a class:

—— a) That is an appropriate size considering the nature and severity of the handicapping condition(s) of the class members.

—— b) With children whose ages differ by not more than five years.

*—— c) With a teacher who is qualified to work with the child's handicapping condition(s). (PL 94-142/121a.12)

*—— d) That provides appropriate instruction for the child based upon the assessment results and IEP. (PL 94-142/121a.533)

*—— e) As close as possible to the child's home. (PL 94-142/121a.522 and Section 504/84.34)

*—— 2) The continuum of placement alternatives (from least restrictive to most restrictive) are considered when meeting educational needs on an individual basis. (PL 94-142/121a.550-554)

—— a) Regular education classrooms and consultants available to the teachers. The child benefits indirectly (through the teacher) from the expertise provided to the teacher by consultants.

—— b) Regular education classrooms with direct services to the child. The child receives direct services from specialists, therapists, or itinerant teachers who work with the child in the regular classroom.

—— c) Regular education classrooms with resource room available. The child spends most of the day in the regular classroom and receives support services from one or more specialists, therapists, or itinerant teachers in a resource room separate from the regular classroom.

—— d) Special classrooms in combination with regular education classroom. The child spends the greater part of the day in a special education classroom and a small portion of the day in a class with non-handicapped students.

—— e) Special education classrooms for full time programs. The child spends all day in a class with handicapped students.

—— f) Self-contained special education classrooms in a special education building. The child is educated in a totally special education setting.

—— g) Home-study. The child is confined at home or in a medical hospital due to illness and cannot attend school. The child's educational program is provided through the telephone or visits from itinerant teachers, specialists, and therapists.

—— h) Residential settings. The child lives in a residential institution for the handicapped and is educated within that setting.

*D. Education-related services are provided to enable the students to benefit from their educational programs. Examples of related services include: (PL 94-142/121a.13)

*—— 1) Speech therapy and audiology provided by qualified speech clinicians and audiologists.

*—— 2) Occupational and physical therapy services provided by qualified therapists.

*—— 3) Counseling services provided by qualified persons.

*—— 4) School social work services.

*—— 5) Parent counseling or training designed to assist the parents in understanding and coping with the special needs of their child.

*—— 6) Recreation programs.

*—— 7) Transportation services including (also see Section 504/84.33)

- *—— a) Special transportation to and from school, between buildings, and within buildings when necessary at no cost to the family.
- *—— b) Vehicles with special equipment.
- *—— c) Trained drivers and aides.
- *—— d) Travel time of not more than one hour each way between home and school.
- *—— e) Reimbursement for parents in cases where they transport their own child to and from school.
- —— f) Cooperative arrangements with other districts or service providers whenever possible for out-of-district or unique transportation situations.
- —— g) Equivalent lengths of the school day and school year for special education students and regular education students unless the IEP states otherwise.

*—— 8) Medical services for educational diagnosis or evaluation.

*—— 9) School health services provided by a qualified school person, such as a nurse.

*E. A variety of other educational options are available to handicapped students. (PL 94-142/121a.14 and 121a.305)

—— 1) Those available to non-handicapped students should also be available to handicapped students. For example:

- *—— a) Art
- *—— b) Music
- *—— c) Consumer education
- *—— d) Home economics
- *—— e) Regular or adaptive physical education
- *—— f) Vocational education
- *—— g) Industrial arts
- *—— h) Sports
- —— i) Sex education
- —— j) Drivers education
- —— k) Bi-lingual classes
- —— l) Field trips

—— 2) Other educational possibilities that might be directly beneficial to handicapped students are:

- —— a) Preschool programs
- —— b) Post-secondary programs (ages 8 to 21)
- —— c) Summer school
- —— d) Work experiences

ASSESSMENT AREA V: EDUCATIONAL SETTING

Handicapped children are educated with non-handicapped children to the greatest extent possible. This includes school programs, academic and social as well as recreational activities. This setting is frequently called "the least restrictive environment."

*A. The education of handicapped students takes place in as normal a school environment as possible. (PL 94-142/121a.550-554 and Section 504/84.34)

- *—— 1) Students receive the necessary special services while attending a neighborhood school with non-handicapped children whenever possible. (PL 94-142/121a.552)
- —— 2) Handicapped children are educated in schools with children of approximately the same age.
- *—— 3) Special education classrooms are near regular education classrooms serving the same age range, and are not confined to separate levels or wings of the building. (Section 504/84.4)
- *—— 4) General use areas within a school building, such as library, gym, shop, lunchroom, and restrooms are available to all students. (Section 504/84.21)
- —— 5) The daily school routine is the same or comparable to that of non-handicapped students in as many ways as possible.
  - *—— a) Meal times and recesses. (PL 94-142/121a.553)
  - *—— b) Music, art, physical education and other regular education specialties. (PL 94-142/305 and Section 504/84.37)
  - —— c) The length of the school day.
  - —— d) Arrival and departure times and procedures.
- *—— 6) The opportunity to be involved in school-sponsored activities such as recreation, clubs, athletics, and school jobs is given to handicapped students. (PL 94-142/121a.306)

*B. An effort is made to adapt the regular school setting in order to make educational programs accessible to the handicapped student. (Section 504/84.22)

- *—— 1) Daily schedules are designed to permit integration of handicapped students into regular education programs and into as many school activities as possible. (PL 94-142/121a.553)
- —— 2) Individualized accommodations relating to educational programming are made. For example,
  - —— a) Interpreters for hearing-impaired students.
  - —— b) Readers for visually-impaired students.
  - —— c) Notetakers for hearing-impaired students or students who cannot write.
  - —— d) Tutoring for students who require additional or remedial instruction.
  - —— e) Special equipment such as tape recorders and typewriters.
  - —— f) Mobility training for visually-impaired.
- —— 3) Training and consultative services are offered to teachers regarding alternative teaching methods for involving and working with the handicapped.

*C. Facilities serving the educational needs of handicapped children are as comparable as possible to the district's other facilities. (Section 504/84.34)
The range of physical settings include:

- —— 1) Regular classrooms in neighborhood schools.
- —— 2) Regular classrooms in school buildings not in the child's neighborhood.
- —— 3) Special education classrooms in regular school buildings.
- —— 4) Special education classrooms in separate special education facilities.
- —— 5) School programs in the home or hospital.
- —— 6) School programs within residential institutions or total-care facilities. (See Assessment Area IV: Placement into Special Education Programs and Related Services for an explanation of "least restrictive environment"as well.)

*D. Physical facilities allow handicapped students access to all educational programs and services. Buildings are remodeled or specially constructed only if the program or service cannot be made accessible to handicapped students through other means. (Section 504/88.22-23)

—— 1) One or more of the following steps are taken if no other means of accommodating the handicapped student can be offered.

*—— a) Redesign equipment.
*—— b) Assign classes to accessible floors or buildings.
*—— c) Provide aides for assistance.
*—— d) Alter buildings to provide access to:

—— (1) Water fountains and fire alarms
—— (2) Restrooms
—— (3) Library
—— (4) Cafeteria
—— (5) Auditorium
—— (6) Gymnasium and locker rooms
—— (7) Laboratory and shop classes
—— (8) Administrative, guidance, and placement offices
—— (9) Swimming pool
——(10) Playground
——(11) Classrooms housing classes that cannot be relocated

*—— 2) Each new facility is constructed so that the facility is usable by handicapped students and staff.

—— 3) Facilities housing separate special education programs are integrated into the community as any neighborhood school would be.

ASSESSMENT AREA VI: PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR THE STUDENT AND THE PARENT

The local district follows procedures that protect the educational rights of the child, the right to the involvement of parents, and the privary rights of the family.

*A. Parents are notified before the school takes any action regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of their handicapped child. (PL 94-142/121a.504)

*—— 1) The notice is given far enough in advance to allow the parents time to prepare for involvement. (PL 94-142/121a.345 and 121a.504)

*—— 2) The notice contains a full explanation of the rights of the parents. The following rights are included. (PL 94-142/121a.505-506)

*—— a) The right to give, withhold, or revoke consent of a proposed school action.

*—— b) The right to examine their child's education records.

*—— c) The right to obtain an independent evaluation.

*—— d) The right to request a hearing, conducted by an impartial hearing officer, if they are not satisfied with evaluation or placement.

*—— e) Their rights during the hearing.

*—— f) The right of administrative appeal if they disagree with the results of the hearing.

*—— g) The right to take action in a civil court if they disagree with the decision of the appeal.

*—— h) The right of the child to receive education services during the proceedings.

*—— 3) The notice is written in language that is understood by parents or communicated orally or by sign if necessary. (PL 94-142/121a.505)

*B. The local school district gives parents and qualified students easy access to the appropriate educational records. (PL 94-142/121a.560-576, Section 504/14.36)

*—— 1) A parent, or student over age 18, may review the student's educational records at any time, or before any meeting or hearing, and in no case later than 45 days after a request. (PL 94-142/121a.562 and PL 93-380/99.11)

*—— a) Parents are given, upon request, a list of the types and locations of education records collected and used by the school. (PL 94-142a.565 and Section 504/84.36)

*—— b) Explanations of the records are given to the parents upon request. (PL 93-380/99.11)

*—— c) Copies of the records are provided to parents if requested. If there is a charge for the copies, it is only for the cost of copying. (PL 94-142/121a.566)

*—— 2) Parents may comment upon or request changes in records if they feel that the information contained is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of their child's rights. (PL-142/121a.567 and PL 93-380/99.20)

*—— 3) Parents may request a hearing, if the school refuses to amend the record.

*—— 4) If the decision of the hearing is that the information is not in violation of the child's rights, parents may include their comments as a permanent part of the child's record.

*C. The local school district has policies and procedures that insure confidentiality of all education records. (PL 94-142/121a.571-572 and 93-380/99a.30-37)

*—— 1) One school official is responsible for safeguarding the confidentiality of personally identifiable information.

*—— 2) The names and positions of all employees who have access to personally identifiable information are available for public inspection.

*—— 3) All employees who have access to the records are trained in policies and procedures regarding confidentiality.

*—— 4) The parent's consent is obtained prior to releasing personally identifiable information for other than specific educational use, or to persons other than those authorized to have access to the records.

*—— 5) A dated list is maintained of any persons (other than the parents and authorized school employees) who have had access to the records. (PL 94-142/121a.563)

*—— 6) The school notifies parents when their child's education records are no longer needed. (PL 94-142/121a.573)

  *—— a) Records are destroyed or personally identifiable information removed at the request of the parents. (A record of attendance including the child's name, address, phone number, class schedule, grades, and attendance may be permanently maintained by the school.)

  *—— b) The school explains to parents the possible consequences of destroying the records. (Some records may be of use in securing benefits for the child at a later date.)

*—— 7) Parents and eligible students are notified annually of their rights in regard to confidentiality of records. (PL 93-380/99.6)

*D. The local school district assigns a surrogate parent to act as an educational advocate for the handicapped child who is a ward of the state or a public or private care agency or whose parent cannot be identified. (PL 94-142/121a.514)

*—— 1) The surrogate parent is selected and assigned in a manner that insures that there will be no conflict of interest when educational decisions are made for the child.

—— 2) The surrogate parent is adequately trained for his or her role.

E. The local school district follows policies and procedures that insure that disagreements regarding the identifiication, evaluation, or educational placement will be fairly resolved.

*—— 1) Due process hearings may be requested by either the parent or the school. (PL 94-142/121a.506-507)

  *—— a) All hearings requested are conducted either by the state or local agency, as determined by state law.

    *——(1) The hearing decision is reached within 45 days of the request for the hearing. (PL 94-142/121a/512)

    *——(2) The hearing is scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for the parents. (PL 94-142/121a.512)

*—— b) The school district keeps a list of the names and qualifications of hearing officers who are not employees of the school district and do not have a personal or professional interest that would affect objectivity.

*—— c) The school district informs parents about their rights before and during the hearing process, such as:

  *——(1) The right to be informed of low-cost legal or other helpful services that might assist in their preparation.

  *——(2) The right to request a hearing with or without other steps, such as formal complaints and mediation, taking place first.

  *——(3) The right of the child to continue to receive education services during the proceedings.

*—— d) The school district informs parents about the specific rights of the school and parent at the hearing. (PL 94-142/121a.508)

  *——(1) To be accompanied and advised by legal counsel and/or other persons knowledgeable about the issue.

  *——(2) To present evidence, cross-examine, and require the attendance of witnesses.

  *——(3) To prevent evidence being introduced that was not available at least five days before the hearing.

  *——(4) To obtain a written or taped record of the hearing.

  *——(5) To obtain the written decision of the hearing officer.

  *——(6) The additional parental right to bring the child to the hearing.

  *——(7) The additional parental right to open the hearing to the public.

*—— 2) Disputed hearing decisions may be appealed by either the parent or the school to the State educational agency. (PL 94-142/121a.510 and 512)

  *—— a) The school and parents may give oral and/or written argument.

  *—— b) The review decision is mailed to each party within 30 days after the request for review is made.

*—— 3) Both the school and the parent may bring suit in a civil court of public law, if agreement on an educational issue cannot be reached in any other way.

For Discussion: Another Type Of Assessment Checklist

A portion of your analysis time should be spent putting the facts and figures you've collected into a broader perspective. The policies and practices you have examined in your study are only one slant to the variety of tangible and intangible factors that interplay to create local special education. Give yourselves an opportunity to move beyond describing the purely procedural.

Don't limit your study to only those things that are "empirically" documentable (although it may be desirable to limit your written report to this). Distinguish in your own minds two kinds of facts: 1) those that are measurable and easily cited, and 2) those that are based on reality but are less measurable. A thorough study should consider both sources of information as valid.

Your group has probably ventured away from the purely factual often with comments like:

- *"That's the way it should work, but under Dr. Smith it's not like that at all."*
- *"Why don't they take better advantage of what the parents have to offer?"*
- *"Sometimes I think the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing."*
- *"The school board is supposedly the last word, but nothing gets by without the recommendation of the superintendent."*
- *"Every building principal has his own way of handling school suspensions. There is no uniformity."*
- *"There is only lip service given to serving the handicapped."*

While statements like the above seem only conjecture or opinion, there is probably more than a grain of truth in the patterns or feelings sensed. Give yourselves credit for your collective ability to "read between the lines."

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

If you've used most or all of the data collection tools contained in this guide, you should have collected an overwhelming quantity of information on local special education practices, and the policies upon which they are based.

The policies are the official rules about the way things are supposed to be done. Practices may actually follow the written rules, but may also be based on unofficial unwritten understandings about the way things really work.

It may not be difficult in modern day special education to have access to very specific written policies reflecting the detailed regulations of the state and federal branches. Whether they are used or not, and in what ways benefit or hinder special education students, are the important questions.

Your final report on the six assessment areas of special education won't be complete without considering whether or not to include reference to these additional points. Consider:

1) Where do practices match or not match formal written policy?

   Example: Although policy clearly acknowledges the parental right to involvement in a special education placement decision, details may not be routinely given unless the school spots a "trouble-maker" — a parent who knows the law.

2) Are the policies detailed enough so that the necessary rules of conduct are known by all?

   Example: In one school building, the necessary parent involvement in the IEP process is achieved by sending the IEP home taped to the wheelchairs. In another building, thanks to one teacher who has recently had a special education graduate course, IEP meetings are held with parents present.

3) Are both written and unwritten policies fluid enough to respond to changing values and patterns of behavior?

   Example: Although mainstreaming special education students into regular classes is theoretically done with cooperation between teachers, in reality special education teachers are reclutant to offer help to regular education teachers on the unspoken understanding that "you just don't go into another teacher's class."

4) What happens when existing policies are violated?

   Example: Several teachers were guilty of slapping minority students. Instead of using the clearly spelled out due process steps to investigate and end faculty misbehavior, the teachers were simply transferred to other schools.

5) Are policies and practices periodically examined?

   Example: The state's program audit team visits the special education district every three years. The district banks on the fact that the state is too overburdened with its monitoring responsibilities to check back and hold the district responsible for making corrections in its system. While rightfully pointing out that it is regularly evaluated, the district does not use the audits as an opportunity to make improvements, nor does it conduct any but the most superficial self-evaluation periodically.

6) Do any policies/practices encourage or interfere with decision-making, communication, or the provision of services?

Example: The new special education regulations regarding student evaluation have substantially reduced the number of minority or bilingual students misplaced in special education classes. On the other hand, the state's regulations permit timelines for evaluation or due process hearings to be counted by "school" rather than "calendar" days. This has the effect of delaying progress during summers and vacations.

AUTHORITY: THE POWER TO CAUSE CHANGE

People — those in positions of power, their advisors and implementers, and those receiving the services — are in a position to create or change an action. Such change can be either immediate or gradual over the course of time.

Lines of power can be traced in terms of the official organizational chart delineating who is responsible for what and to whom. The chart can show where both direct or support responsibilities lie, as well as where overlapping or no responsibliity is taken. Such a chart can also suggest the attitude the school district has about the implementation of certain programs.

The realities of power, however, move beyond the organizational chart and rest ultimately with individual people with individual beliefs and goals. *Power may rest with a handful of friendly cohorts who, regardless of their titles or job descriptions, are the real decision-makers. This may be a group who rose from the ranks of a single building, or a "gang" of administrators who side together against some perceived "enemy."*

Tradition also plays a big role in power. Your school board, for example, may really be a rubber stamp to the superintendent because that's the way it's always been and new members are specifically chosen to fit the mold.

There may be individuals within the system with whom parents or advocates have found they can work. These individuals may be willing to share information or allow themselves to be forced to deal with an issue if an appropriate threat suggested by them is made. This may range from a strategically placed school secretary on up to the head of a department.

Groups of individuals not usually assumed to be part of a school power structure also have the capacity to effect change. Consider students who demand attention because of a strike, parents who have organized over a single large issue, or advisory boards who repeat and repeat their recommendations or engage in behind the scenes negotiations.

1) With whom does the power to effect change really or potentially lie?

—— School board
—— Superintendent
—— Department administrators
—— Principals
—— Teachers
—— Teacher association or union
—— Students
—— Parents
—— Advisory boards
—— General community
—— Suppliers of materials
—— State-level policymakers
—— Federal regulatory agencies

2) How much communication goes on between those differing degrees of power?

Example: The superintendent may know virtually nothing about the needs of special education students because parents are silent and the department of special education does not want to share its power by communicating even more than the barest minimum.

3) Who influences the participation of other groups?

Example: Whether regular education teachers have in-service on mainstreaming is an issue that may rest, not with them, their principals, or the staff development coordinator, but with the teachers' union.

4) Which groups have the power to reward or penalize other groups?

Example: One superintendent, his district's representative on the Special Education Board of Managers, has consistently blocked special education expansion by threatening to pull his resources out of the cooperative each time new proposals are discussed. Since his is the largest district providing the most special education classroom space, he usually gets his way.

RESOURCES

A school district's resources include all that it holds of value—both its real property and the intangibles of its human elements. The presence of these resources will have a bearing on how well a district functions and in what way changes need to be made.

Money is commonly thought of first as the school district's most important resource. The way money is spent will reflect what the real priorities of a school district are.

1) To what degree are your school district's resources found among these?

—— The community tax base
—— Funds and other support from state and federal sources
—— Buildings, equipment, and supplies
—— Competent or inspiring administrators
—— Caring teachers
—— Supportive parents
—— Positive community status or reputation

Example: In comparing two special education districts of similar size, numbers, and income, District 1 bursts with innovative projects while District 2 struggles to provide the minimum. The difference is due to the ingenuity of District 1's Director of Special Education, who actively seeks out grant monies and participates in local special activities.

2) What resources are needed by each group of students, teachers, specialists, and administrators?

Example: Rather than investing in a new but separate building for special education students, a way was found to add special facilities, such as pools and specially equipped gyms, to existing schools. Now, all children assigned to these buildings benefit from the use of this addition.

3) Which of the district's resources can be brought into fuller play to improve the quality of education?

Example: There are 22 elementary and 10 secondary counselors on the faculty rolls. Yet only a handful of children receive individual counseling, and this is provided by contract with the local mental health center. The school counselors are not providing counseling because their jobs have been allowed to evolve into paper shuffling for the building principals.

4) Which groups have the greatest amount of resources available to them?

Example: The district's newly hired special education teachers, because of their commitment and sense of embarking on a fresh frontier, are by far, collectively, the best service providers to the district's children.

5) Does the school's population of handicapped students suffer in the process of distributing resources?

Example: The school district, in trying to balance its upcoming budget, is leaning toward curtailing some of the extras offered special education students. They rationalize that handicapped students have gotten along before without much and that the federal government will pick up the tab for special education anyway.

UNDERLYING VALUES

Fitting all the pieces of the schools' puzzle together wouldn't be complete without a searching look at the values held by the dominant individuals involved in special education. Such values are the standards against which to measure what is acceptable for the education of the handicapped. This is usually the bottom line when quality is being studied.

1) Do the values held regarding the handicapped differ from group to group?

   Example: Early in their parenthood parents are forced to face the reality that they will be part of only a small minority willing to fight for more than the minimum for their handicapped children.

2) What basic assumptions are going unquestioned regarding the handicapped, their parents, and the school?

   Example: "As teachers, we know how children learn best and how much or how little to expect. That's why we went to school for all these years."

3) Do the school district's values reflect belief in the potential of handicapped individuals?

   Example: "We believe in a loosely structured daily living skills program for our severely mentally handicapped students. Job skills are entirely unrealistic."

4) How are positive and negative values communicated?

   Example: "The normal students say it's distasteful to eat with the handicapped students. It's such a mess that I asked to be taken off lunch duty this year."

As a group, discuss what you've learned within the context of the above guidelines. Then use this information in one or both of the following two ways:

- To give realistic nuances to the factual content that will be written into your final report, and/or
- To help you later in finding the pressure points that will effect positive change.

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*Based upon concepts outlined in "What Is a System? How Does It Work, Some Strategies for Change" by Beverly Ann Scott. (American Association of University Women) 1977, and Getting the Facts: Map-Making, School Improvement Series, Designs for Change, Chicago, 1979 (first draft).

Guidelines For Writing The Final Report

Suggested Format For Your Report

Title Page: Date

Special Education District
Superintendent(s)
Director of Special Education

Title of Report

Members of Assessment Team

Introductory Page: State purpose of the report and methods used in gathering information.

Content of Report: Comment on each of the assessment areas by making a statement about the current status of special education. Follow it with recommendations, if any.

A. CURRENT STATUS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

1. Cite Accomplishments
    - Describe accomplishments made in meeting the mandates of the law.
    - Describe accomplishments made over and above the requirements of the law, including exemplary programs and practices.
    - Cite significant improvements in specific areas, if comparative information was available.
2. Cite Weak Areas
    - Describe areas where the delivery of services is absent, poor, or only partially in place.
    - Describe areas where present practice is in violation of the mandates of the law.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Follow each statement of problem area with a clearly identified recommendation.
2. Begin each recommendation with a direct verb. (For example, "Initiate", "Review", "Plan".)
3. Specify the school department(s) with which responsibility for treating the problem might rest.

Concluding Statement: End the report with a summarizing statement, which might:

A. Reiterate significant facts.

B. Convey the overall impressions of the system and its philosophy.

C. Pinpoint the overriding issues that need to be addressed.

Role Of Chairperson

1. Introduce each area of consideration. Use the Assessment Checklist for a guide.
2. Encourage the participation of all team members.
3. Establish a consensus about each area.
4. Write down the report as it is developed.
5. Agree in advance how questions of wording will be handled.
   Suggestion: assign one team member to rewrite the statement in question.

Other Suggested Guidelines

1. Base comments on well-documented evidence from a variety of sources.
2. Cite individuals by title only, not name.
3. Be specific about the degree and location of the problem area (ex: system-wide, at building level, in_____% of cases, etc.).

See APPENDIX E for a sample section of a final report.

Strategies For Effecting Change

USING THE FINAL REPORT

Your study of special education in the local public school has measured whether each handicapped child is receiving an appropriate education. Your final report shows what you have found out so far. But even a final report is never final. If you are satisfied for the most part with what you have seen, you want to keep it that way. If you are not, you want to work for change. Unless you press forward to encourage the school to preserve its good points, or correct its deficiencies, your report has served no purpose. If your report is by and large positive, five years from now you might find the school still using it to pat itself on the back while the quality of special education remains stagnant. If it is a negative report, you might find the same deficiencies in five years unless you put your final report to work for you.

To make it work, here are some suggestions about how to get the information from your final report to the people who count, and about how to get action out of the decision makers and the public to whom they are finally accountable.

PREVIEW BY THE DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

As a matter of courtesy, you should give the director of special education a first look at your final report. This is often required in the case of an on-site visit by a professional review team. For you, it is more than just a matter of courtesy: imagine what happens to your credibility if you are caught in an error of fact, no matter how reliable the rest of your report. By giving the director of special education a chance to react first, you have the opportunity to correct any inaccuracies for which you might be responsible.

Explain to the director that your group will release its report by a certain date. Give a reasonable amount of time for him or her to point out any errors of fact that should be corrected, but don't delay the release of your report because of no reaction. If the director of special education tries to talk you into changing a judgment or softening a recommendation, stand firm and explain that the responsibility for judgments and recommendations in the report is yours. The situation is unlikely to occur, because special education directors are accustomed to professional reviews, but there is always a chance that you will be treated less than professionally.

REPORT DISSEMINATION

The director of special education has reacted, you may have made some changes, and you are now ready to go ahead with making your report public. Who is the public that you want to reach? If you have hopes that the school administration will listen to you and can make some changes, you will want every school board member, superintendent, department head and principal to have a copy.

If your budget is tight, start at least with the school board. Give a copy of the report to the secretary of the school board and ask that it be shared. You may have a key ally on the school board who can see that the school makes copies for everyone.

Teachers will probably be your best friends from within the school system; after all, they want to lower the teacher-pupil ratio as much as you do, and they want a safe, decent, pleasant place in which to teach. If you can't afford to print copies for everyone, at least give copies to the leaders of the teachers' union or bargaining agent and education association. Most special education teachers belong to the Council for Exceptional Children. If there is an active local chapter, find out who the leaders are and ask that your report be the topic of a meeting. Request an invitation.

Be selective about which administrators receive a copy. People like the superintendent and the director of special education will be the ones making whatever changes should be made, so they belong on the top of your distribution list.

The parents of special education students should be the most important target of all. They are the ones who can organize for change by keeping the pressure on. Whatever your printing budget, you must reach the parents somehow. If you can't mail a copy of the final report to every parent you know—and most consumer groups can't—try some of these strategies:

- Approach a civic-minded group such as the League of Women Voters, the Junior League, or the American Association of University Women, for printing costs. A form letter sent out to the presidents of social clubs, asking for small donations no larger than $10 per club and promising not to come back for more, may bring in enough money to help.
- Print a short summary of your final report, placing the greatest emphasis on the recommendations. Make this smaller version the one you distribute in quantity. Print it on a single sheet of paper, both sides, pamphlet style, on eye-catching colored paper. Tell who you are, how you came together to survey special education, what school districts you looked at, and how you proceeded. Summarize the main things you discovered, as well as the strengths and weak-

nesses of the system. End with your specific recommendations. State where readers can see a copy of the final report.

- Approach the leaders of local parent groups—The Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, United Cerebral Palsy Association, Spina Bifida, and others. They may be able to help you distribute the report or the summary to their own members, and they may give you a page or two in their newsletter.
- Use your community library. Take a copy of your final report to each branch, and talk to the librarian about putting it on display and distributing it.
- Contact your community's informal leadership: the Y's, the leagues, the chambers, the mayor's citizen advisory committee, the ministerial associations, and the church and temple groups. Offer to speak at their meetings, and let them know what the problems are and what the remedies can be.
- Send a news release about your study and the resulting report to the local news media.

FOLLOW UP WITH ACTION

Getting the information out is one thing; effecting change in the school system is something else, and harder work. Many groups tend to be cynical about the school's ability to change, or doubtful about their own power to make change happen. The following advice won't work for every group, but it should help those who are just getting started.

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Prioritize the recommendations contained in your final report. Note which changes are the most important, and which you will work on first. Then decide who is capable of making the changes you want to see. It does no good for you to blame the director of special education for long bus rides and short class days if it is the director of transportation or the business manager who buys the buses and schedules the drivers. In the same way you are wasting your time if you blame the school board for the inadequate funding for which the state legislature is responsible. Know who's in charge, and make some friends in the system who might be able to endorse your position when you take your problems to the decision makers.

The most important change won't necessarily be the one your group works on first. You may want to take on an issue that can be tackled immediately and solved soon or easily, and reserve the big issue that takes more time for a later date. An administrator can change a lunchroom policy overnight, but it takes months to get a van with a wheelchair lift. You haven't abandoned your priorities if you go first for the quick one. Your group may need a success or two to convince the public (and perhaps yourselves) that you're capable of handling big issues.

WORKING THROUGH THE SCHOOL BOARD

Find out from the superintendent's office how to get on the agenda and request time. Give the board advance copies of your report.

Meet to prioritize your recommendations and select a speaker who knows how to deal with the school board, get their attention, and convince them that your group means business. A good speaker isn't necessarily the leader of your group or the head of your assessment project. Those individuals might serve best by sitting in the second row, ready to answer questions.

Always start with appropriate, positive comments emphasizing how much the school's personnel cooperated with you during the survey, highlighting some of the best parts of the school system. Then summarize your recommendations. Explain that you hope to work with the school administration on some of these recommendations, and that you expect the school board will want to know from time to time what successes you are having.

Let them know that you are aware of the many things beyond the power of the school board to change, but that you hope the school board will support you in your approaches to the state education department, the budget agency, the tax board or the state legislature. Tell the board that you will want to know its position on the issues you propose to address.

Then let the board know what recommendations for change you feel are in the local school's power to make. Say that you expect to hear whether the board agrees with your assessment and your recommendations, and that you expect to be invited back to report progress. Let them know that your group will be looking for their response.

Don't let the school forget your cause. Someone from your group may need to be present at every school board meeting. That person should identify himself or herself as representing your group at each meeting. He or she should ask at least one question at each meeting: "When will we see that lift van you discussed last May?" "There are rumors that Hayes School will serve only retarded students next year; is that a serious proposal?" "Are there concrete plans to hire another LD teacher in the middle school?" Choose a different issue for comment each month. If you can, print a statement for the audience and for the press.

Your delegate to the school board should have a good memory, too. If you've been put off at the May meeting with a remark like, "We'll look into it," take that literally as a promise. You can then come back in June and ask who really did look into it, ask what they found and what they will do next.

One word of warning: if you group's delegate to the school board always makes the school board or the administration look ridiculous, it may make good theater, but it will slow down or prevent change. Always keep the focus on the issues, not the personalities. Offer to work with the school board on the solutions.

FORM A PARENT COMMITTEE

A few people can work well with a school board, but not everyone can be a leader. You need numbers, footsoldiers, and you need to be able to claim validly that you speak for a large number of parents representing all disabilities. You will have to decide whether to work from outside the school system or from within. The advantage of forming a parent group outside the system is that you preserve your independence, you set the agenda, you do the work, and you guarantee your integrity.

Or you might want to work partially within the system by having someone from your group participate in your district's parent advisory board if one exists. If one does not exist, your group could take the leadership in encouraging its formation. Remember, federal and state laws encourage parental input at all levels of the special education process. Having participated in the study of your special education district, your group would have knowledgeable members to contribute to an advisory board.

Whatever methods your group choose, keep in mind that parent apathy leads nowhere. Many of the positive changes that have come about in the education of handicapped children have been the result of parents continually advocating for the rights of their children. Don't get discouraged if changes don't occur overnight, and don't expect "the other guy" to do the work. Work with other parents to affect change in an organized, persistent and informed manner.

NOTE

For more ideas, see Let Our Children Go, An Organizing Manual for Advocates and Parents by Douglas Biklen, Human Policy Press, P.O. Box 127, University Station, Syracuse, NY 13210 ($3.50)

SECTION 5

APPENDIX

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APPENDIX

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Appendix A

Suggestions For Conducting Interviews

In the course of an assessment study, parents will have an opportunity to communicate with school personnel and with other parents. While the educational goals of both groups will be similar, school personnel and parents will each approach the issue of education for handicapped children from two distinct perspectives.

As a parent conducting an interview, your manner of dealing with both groups should reflect an understanding of possibly differing views on school and parental roles. The fact that you are a parent initiating the dialogue will have a bearing as well on the manner in which a response is given.

A parent conducting an interview has an opportunity to not only collect information, but to possibly establish or modify lines of parent-school communication. For this reason, you as an interviewer should be very conscious of the importance of your role and the positive consequences it can have.

While the actual process of interviewing requires neutral behavior and low-key encouragement to share information, the lead-in will need to be done carefully.

In dealing with special education administrators and teachers, a good place to begin is to get the professionals to agree that one of the school's jobs is to provide parents with the information they need to make informed joint decisions. Then, with a mutual understanding of the value of information-sharing having been established, you and the interviewee can proceed in a positive vein.

Before getting down to particular questions, give the interviewee a brief overall picture of the purpose of your group's assessment study. Present yourself and the project as openly and confidently as possible: who you are, why you're there, what you hope to accomplish.

The persons you interview will need to see that the time he or she spends with you is important and worthwhile. Be alert to the doubts the school person or parent may have about the value of their effort in the interview process.

Make clear that the purpose of the interview is to gather information that will be combined with information from other sources, in order to develop as complete and accurate a picture as possible.

Reassure school persons and parents that the interview is not meant to evaluate them personally. In the case of a parent-interviewee, it should be conveyed as well that you are not measuring the degree of their involvement or lack of involvement in their child's schooling.

Be prepared that school administrators and service providers may exhibit responses to you that range from defensiveness and uncertainty, to respectful openness. Parents of handicapped children served by the school will reflect a variety of attitudes in their interviews as well. In addition to insecurity about their knowledge or rights, parents may show complacency, frustration, or distrust. One important feeling often expressed is a reluctance "to rock the boat" with the schools, because of the fear of repercussions to their child.

Do what you can to keep the interview as free as possible from any kind of pressure. In order for the interviewee to cooperate comfortably, he or she needs to feel that the meeting with you will be pleasant as well as worthwhile.

One additional point to keep in mind: Be careful not to make assumptions about the level of knowledge that the person being interviewed may or may not have. Also, do not presume that he or she knows everything because of the title or position. Neither should you presume the interviewee knows nothing.

SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES OF INTERVIEWING

An interview is roughly structured into three phases: an Opening, the Exchange, and Closing.

Phase 1: Opening the Interview

It should not be necessary to consciously try to establish rapport with the individual being interviewed. Putting a lot of effort into being friends with the interviewee will be a poor use of time and, in any event, will only raise suspicions. Going through the interview process in a business-like yet friendly manner should be a sufficient indication of the tone you wish to convey.

After you have explained the purpose of your visit and your group's efforts, deal with the issue of time - the time that you are asking the interviewee to give answering your questions and the time he is prepared to spend with you.

Establish your own role as a member of a study team in such a way that you do not diminish yourself in the eyes of the interviewee. Avoid statements such as "I'm not a professional and I don't know much about special education at all," or, "I never have been able to understand psychometrist's jargon."

The purpose of your group's data collection efforts is to assemble and present a public report from the parent perspective. However, if confidentiality regarding the sharing of certain pieces of information is requested, give it and then be sure to honor it.

Nonverbal as well as verbal communication is important in your initial behavior. Smile, use a normal tone of voice. Maintain eye contact, and keep a relaxed body posture. Be conscious of your body signaling rigidity, restlessness, defensiveness, or shock. Avoid creating the impression that this is a cross-examination or quiz.

Phase 2: The Question and Answer Exchange

Several techniques can be used to encourage the sharing of information or to elicit additional details.

If you are using a questionnaire, be faithful to the manner in which the questions on the questionnaires are phrased. Read the questions slowly. Avoid paraphrasing. In asking the question, don't attempt to answer the question for the person. Don't apologize for the question. Let the individual being interviewed react and choose to answer or not answer.

If you are pursuing your own line of questioning, do not use leading questions that state the respondent's conclusion for him or her, or inadvertantly cue the person to give responses you might consider extremely desirable. Do use, however, some open-ended questions to encourage the interviewee to share information.

Open-ended questions allow the person responding to fully express as much as he or she desires. Quesions phrased in this way are good at the beginning of an interview because they allow the interviewee an opportunity to think about the topic and express general feelings, before treating specific areas of a topic. An example of an open-ended question is "How are the transportation needs of your handicapped students met?"

By contrast, in closed questions, there are several answers from which the respondent can choose - usually either yes/no or multiple choice. An example of a closed question would be "Is your child educated with children approximately the same age? -Yes? -No?"

If the interviewee tends to digress, lead him or her back to the topic at hand with brief, closed questions. Shorten long personal anecdotes by anticipating their ending. But be careful not to interrupt directly or abruptly.

If you want the interviewee to express his or her own feelings as well as thoughts, you may deliberately express your own feelings to show that open sharing is the tone you would like to set. Statements as "I know I'd be terribly upset if I had a 5th grader who couldn't read," could be used.

Silence is often an effective way to encourage someone to respond. Neutral comments such as "mm - hm," or "I see" also encourage sharing because they signify that you hear and understand what is being said without necessarily expressing agreement or contradiction. Also, simple probing phrases such as "Anything else?" or "What do you mean?" will indicate that you are interested and encourage additional sharing.

Repeat what the interviewee has said if you want an idea elaborated, or if you want to summarize several statements.

Restate in your own words the person's feelings about his position in order to clarify or check your interpretation or, again, if you want to summarize.

If something awkward has just been said, give the interviewee time to think and regroup his or her thoughts. Keep eye contact and remain in the same posture. Don't rush in to fill up the void of silence with your own words. Never question the validity of a response during the interview.

Don't be afraid to comment on the nonverbal communication you are picking up on, especially if it appears to contradict what is being conveyed verbally. Saying something like, "I felt your hesitation before you responded," or "Are you uneasy because you don't understand the question?" will hopefully encourage the interviewee to clarify the message. Ask for clarification also whenever you feel you have received two pieces of information that appear contradictory. For example, "You said that you had a case conference, but that you didn't help write the IEP."

Phase 3: Closing

Abide as closely as you can to the agreed-upon time limits. Don't prolong the closing of the interview, but do allow the interviewee an opportunity to clear up any questions or doubts that he or she may have about the interview. Avoid offering any closing advice. If problems are put before you, show that you do understand the problem expressed, and that perhaps you and/or some other specific person (name them) could meet to discuss the other issues at a later time. Warmly thank the interviewee for his time and cooperation.

The principles of interviewing in may ways are those same principles basic to any form of communication. Mutual respect is a prerequisite. The interviewer must convey his awareness that he or she acknowledges and accepts whatever differences exist between himself or herself and the person responding. When an involved parent is dealing with a non-involved or reluctant parent, for example, it might be reassuring to say something like "Sometimes I feel that only another parent can understand the demands made on a parent of a handicapped child." With school personnel, acknowledge whatever general truths that can be agreed upon, such as, "The shortage of physical therapists must make it very hard for you to add to your staff."

Appendix B
Leading Group Activities

Group activities, such as discussions and meetings for planning or data analysis, will be an integral part of your team study of local special education. How successful these activities are will depend upon how conscious the group leaders and members are of the many factors that can affect people working together.

When your group comes together, its members will do two things: 1) work on a task, and 2) interact among themselves. Even with a clearly stated task and detailed methods for approaching it, a variety of group, individual, or leadership problems can get in the way of success. It may help to be aware of some of the pitfalls and possibilities of group interaction.

THE GROUP AS A WHOLE

A group may sometimes have difficulty beginning a task. Members may unconsciously be avoiding it, in fact, for a variety of reasons. Check out the following possible negative reactions that may prevent the group from getting underway.

- Fear of the size of the task.
- Fear of the consequences of making a decision.
- Frustration because of a lack of enough clear information.
- Feelings of inadequacy in dealing with the issue.
- Fear of conflict that airing views may bring.
- Feelings of uninvolvement.
- Lack of desire to work hard.
- Fear of hostility toward the leader or dominant member of the group.

Certain kinds of behaviors will give you clues that one of the above problems exist. It is usually easy to see when a group is on edge. Members speak more vehemently and rejection of suggestions occur easily. Subtle personal attacks may creep into the discussion. Groups or individuals may polarize around an issue or divide up according to loyalty; i.e., teachers vs. parents.

The below-the-surface problems and the resulting behaviors need to be cleared away as quickly as they are identified. The best way to do this is to acknowledge them aloud and discuss them. Point out the effects of such behavior on group functioning. Invite members to describe what they see as impediments. Focus attention on the problem or behavior, not the person. Labeling a person as hostile, fearful, or disinterested will only increase defensiveness. Members will participate more effectively when everyone understands why events take the turns they do.

Consider using consensus rather than majority rule as your group's method of decision-making. To reach a consensus there needs to be enough communication so that everyone is willing to go along with a proposal.

Complete approval from all is not the goal of consensus. You have reached a consensus when:

- All group members have had a chance to air their views.
- As wide a range of alternatives as possible have been presented.
- Enough psychological space has been given to allow members an opportunity to modify their stands if they wish.
- Areas of disagreement have been narrowed down by working on underlying agreements.
- Each member has accepted the group point of view as logical or feasible for basically similar or complementary reasons.

When this happens, a group decision has been made. The consensus process still allows a single person to block the group if he thinks it necessary, but by looking for the acceptable alternative for all parties, win-lose situations can be avoided. When a dissenting member finally agrees, don't feel that he must be regarded later by having his way on some other point. That would be bargaining rather than consensus.

THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Being a member of a group can fill an individual's emotional and social needs. Opportunities for recognition, a feeling of belonging and self-expression should all be rightfully expected and available to each member. Sometimes, however, an individual's personal needs may run a meeting or discussion aground. Persons guilty of using distracting behavior to meet their own needs may try to:

- Demand recognition by interrupting others, relating long personal experiences, or engaging in whispering or clowning.
- Dominate the meeting by speaking authoritatively on all subjects, attacking ideas before they are freely expressed, or showing intolerance for opposing opinions.
- Seek power by challenging the leader consistently, or attempting to attract supporters in order to lead his or her own subgroup.
- Push their own special interest by steering the discussion to a personal agenda of issues, or attempting to put their words into the mouths of others.

An individual member may also, for reasons that may or may not be evident, attempt to block progress by bringing back dead issues, or repeatedly forecasting failures. At the opposite extreme is someone who withdraws from participation by adopting a helpless attitude or avoiding sharing.

A leader can forestall or control some of these behaviors by negotiating at the outset a "contract" stating timelines, how decisions will be made (majority rule, consensus, or authority rule), and how problems (sidetracking, dispute, etc.) will be handled.

In addition to reminding individuals of such previous agreements, a good leader or strong member can act as a model for a direct, firm, and friendly style that others can emulate. Some of the roles a leader can assume to help maintain good member relations are ones of:

- Encouragement. Being responsive to others; accepting their contributions; offering praise; seeking out and giving all a chance to be heard.
- Monitor of tension. Sensing feelings and moods; removing personal attack from differences in opinion; placing a tense situation in a broader context.
- Spokesman for group feelings. Describing reactions of the group; sharing feelings sensed.
- Harmonizer. Mediating differences; pointing out the strengths of alternative solutions.

THE ROLE OF THE LEADER

There are at least three styles of leadership: 1) authoritarian, 2) group-centered, or 3) neutral. While no one style is right or wrong, a group-centered approach can be productive and, at the same time, conducive to good member relations.

In addition to monitoring group interaction, the traditional leadership activities that keep the group on task are also necessary, such as:

- Seeking and sharing information
- Pinpointing issues
- Clarifying
- Outlining alternatives
- Summarizing
- Pacing the group within established timelines
- Testing for consensus

Good leaders are not only concerned with making the group productive but they also help develop a climate of trust, and deal with internal problems that can disrupt a meeting.

Based on information contained in:
Techniques for Organizational Effectiveness by Claire Fulcher and Mary Grebe, American Association of University Women, Washington, DC, 1978
Making Meetings Work, A Guide for Leaders and Group Members by Leland P. Bradford, University Associates, San Diego, CA, 1976

Appendix C

Examples Of Tests That Can Be Used In Whole Or In Part By Disabled Children

The tests that your school district uses for evaluation may be similar to those listed below. This is only a partial sampling of the variety of testing instruments available.

Achievement Tests

Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)
Gray Oral Reading Test
Key Math Diagnostic Arithmetic Test
Woodcock Reading Mastery Test
Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test
Stanford Diagnostic Reading
Stanford Early School Achievement Test

IQ Tests

Weschler Preschool & Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI), Ages 4½ - 6½
Weschler Intelligence Scale (WISC-R), Ages 6 - 16
Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), Ages 16 —
Stanford-Binet, Form LM, All Ages
Nebraska Test of Learning Aptitude for Young Deaf Children
Interim Hayes-Binet Intelligence Test for the Blind
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Ages 2 - 18
Columbia Mental Maturity Scale, Ages 3½ - 10
Leiter International Performance Scale, Ages 2 - 18
Cattell Infant Intelligence Scale
Bayley Scale of Infant Development (California First Year Mental Scale)

Adaptive Behavior and Personality Tests

Projective personality tests:
- Thematic Apperception Test (picture stories)
- Children's Apperception Test (picture stories)
- Goodenough-Harris Drawing Test, Ages 3 - 15
- Blacky Picures (Blum, 1967)
- Holtzman Inkblot Technique (Holtzman, 1966)
- Jr.-Sr. High School Personality Questionnaire (Cattell, Coan, & Belloff, 1969)
- School Apperception Method (Solomon & Starr, 1968)

Tests of adaptive behavior:
- AAMD Adaptive Behavior Scale - Public School Version, Ages 7 - 13 (revised 1974)
- Vineland Social Maturity Scale, Ages Birth - 30 yrs
- Cain-Levine Social Competency Scale, Ages 5 - 13

Balthazar Scales of Adaptive Behavior for the Profoundly and Severely Mentally Retarded, Ages 5 - 57
The Denver Developmental Screening Test, Ages 2 wks - 6.4 yrs

Special Diagnostic Tests

Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt Test
Frostig Developmental Tests of Visual Perception
Screening Test for Identifying Children with Specific Language Disability (Slingerland)
Auditory Discrimination Test
Memory for Designs Test (Graham & Kendall, 1960
Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities
Individual Screening Test Using Pure-Tone Audiometer
Massachusetts Vision Test

Vocational Tests

Aptitude Tests:
- Differential Aptitude Tests, Ages 8 -13
- Flanagan Aptitude Classification Tests, Grades 9 - 12 and adults
- General Aptitude Test Battery, Grades 9 - 12 and adults
- Manual Dexterity Tests
- Mechanical Aptitude Tests, Grades 8 - 12
- Minnesota Clerical Test, Grades 7 through adulthood
- Minnesota Mechanical Assemble Test, Grades 11 through adulthood
- Scholastic Aptitude Test
- Seashore Musical Talent Test, Ages 4 - 16 and adults

Interest Tests:
- Kuder Occupational Interest Survey
- Strong Campbell Interest Inventory
- Strong Vocational Interest Blank for Men and Women, Ages 16 and over

For more information on tests and evaluation, see the following sources:

* Almost Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Testing

Available from:
Parent Information Center
P.O. Box 1422
Concord, NH 03301

* The Directive Teacher Magazine

Subscription available from:
Business Office
356 Arps Hall, 1945 North High Street
Ohio State University
Columbus, OH 43210

Educator's Resource Guide to Special Education - William E. Davis

Available from:
The Library
Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
Boston, MA
1980

* Exceptional Parent Magazine

Subscription available from:
P.O. Box 4944
Manchester, NH

A Handbook on Standardized School Testing

Available from:
D.C. Citizens for Better Public Education, Inc.
95 M Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20024

Labeling the Children - William Krasner

Available from:
National Institute of Mental Health
Division of Scientific and Public Information/
Mental Health Studies and Report Branch
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

The Mental Measurements Yearbooks - Oscar Buros, Editor

Available from:
The Library
The Gryphon Press
Highland Park, NJ
1978 (8th Edition)

Parents Can Understand Testing

Available from:
National Committee for Citizens in Education
Columbia, MD

Parents' Guide to Understanding Tests

Available from:
CTB/McGraw-Hill
Del Monte Research Park
Monterey, CA

* Psychological Testing of Children: A Consumer's Guide - Stanley D. Klein, MD.

Available from:
The Exceptional Parent Press
Boston, MA

(NOTE: Some articles in this book were printed in Exceptional Parent Magazine in 1972 and 1973)

* Testing and Public Law 94-142: A Handbook for Parents

Available from:

Closer Look
Parents' Campaign for Handicapped Children and Youth
P.O. Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013

Testing: Its Uses and Abuses

Available from:

National Education Association
1201 16th Stteet N.W.
Washington, DC 20036

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR APPLIED PERFORMANCE TESTING

Sponsored by the National Institute of Education
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
710 S.W. Second Avenue
Portland, OR 97204

COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSTIC SERVICE

A division of The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Project PAVE

Vocational Assessment Center
3300 Century Avenue
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

* Highly recommended for parents

Appendix D

Sample Page From A Final Report

ASSESSMENT AREA IV: PLACEMENT INTO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RELATED SERVICES

Placement Decisions

Decisions on placement are based on needs of the child as well as what is available in the school corporation. Parents may not be aware they can ask for programs and services that may not currently exist. Although the district hasn't the staff to create programs on all needs in all cases, in the past two years several new programs have been created on the basis of individual children's needs. This is very encouraging and commendable and it is hoped that this trend will continue to grow. Some examples of programs developed in this way are the middle and secondary learning disabilities programs, the diagnostic kindergarten, and the special needs program at Morningside.

Programs

Educational programs exist for all areas of disability for children aged 5 through 18. A preschool deaf-blind program is also in place, and the district is to be commended for providing such a program to children outside the mandated age limits.

Since January of 1974 the school corporation has played an active role in the development of summer programs for handicapped children, i.e., SMR-PMR, moderate, and deaf-blind. Although the major funding source has been the local Association for Retarded Citizens, the district has made materials, facilities, and equipment available for these programs. The district is to be commended for this educational program not currently mandated by state law.

There are plans to expand programs in the area of diagnostic kindergarten and secondary mentally handicapped.

RECOMMENDATION: Areas in which program growth is needed include 1) expansion of all LD programs, particularly at secondary level, 2) well-defined vocational programs, 3) expansion of the programs for emotionally disturbed, 4) expansion and improvement for the prevocational education programs, and 5) increased occupational therapy and services (see below).

Related Services

There are significant needs in the area of providing education-related services. While many required related services are offered within the school district, such as speech, adaptive physical education, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and limited counseling, some are not available across the board to handicapped children in need of them. The attempts at placing children in the least restrictive environment (such as keeping a child in his neighborhood school) sometimes limits the availability of such services. The limited size of related services staff also often prohibits extensive implementation. For example, the speech clinician's caseload is 1,200 students with an average of 40 minutes per week per child, and 2.9 children per group. The occupational therapy caseload ratio is 99 children to 2 therapists, at 30 minutes twice a week.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase the related services staff in all areas in order to serve more children for longer periods.

A limited amount of counseling is available to students in need. This service could be expanded by redefining the job description of the corporation's currently employed counselors. Currently, counseling is not a direct service of the special education department, and is not designed to help a child with emotional problems. The counselor's role now includes career guidance, scheduling, and assistant principal activities.

RECOMMENDATION: Counseling services by qualified persons should be provided at all grade levels. The job description of existing counselors who are qualified should be redesigned to allow for therapeutic counseling of children with those needs.

The specialists working in all areas of related services need to increase their communication with parents and other teachers so that their programs can be better integrated.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop communication between specialists and parents by encouraging specialists to meet informally with parents, to attend parent-teacher meetings, or to create parent counseling programs. Specialists-teacher communication can be improved by inservice programs that allow the specialists to share their knowledge and skills and secure the cooperation and support of the teachers.

Transportation

Transportation for special education students is provided directly by the school corporation or through contract with outside nonschool employed persons. While transportation can be a very complicated problem, strides have been made. We commend the transportation department for cutting travel time significantly for many children, although there are still some problems with shortened school days and cases of bus rides longer than one hour which need to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATION: Bus scheduling should be carefully studied and expanded, if necessary, to allow for a full school day for each child. The new transportation plan designed for racial integration should include special education transportation as well.

Parents could profit from more shared information about transportation improvements and services.

RECOMMENDATION: Make parents aware of improved transportation scheduling when making decisions about a child's placement away from the home school. This is especially true if transportation has been a significant deterrant discouraging parents from choosing appropriate programs for their children that they have judged to be too far away.

Parents also need to be informed that 1) they are to be reimbursed if they transport their own child, and 2) that transportation does exist between buildings for special services and programs on a limited basis.

There is a need for additional aides on special education buses to insure safety.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase the number of aides assigned to buses or vans transporting handicapped children with special needs.

Regular Education Specialties

Regular education classes, such as art, music, and physical education, are available to special education children when appropriate. With program alteration or adaptation, more regular activities, such as shop or home economics and driver's education, could be made available for students with special needs. The district is to be commended for including special students in the school's sports programs, although, this too is an area that might be expanded. School jobs are also open to special education students. In addition to cafeteria, office, and custodial work, some act as aides to teachers in regular education classrooms such as at Hill School.

Appendix E

Resolving Differences With School Officials

It is inevitable that parents and school officials will sometimes disagree with each other on large and small educational issues. Each side brings to an encounter its own views on school capabilities, parental roles, and educational goals. Parents and school persons have, in addition, their own set of personal attitudes and feelings about themselves and the handicapped.

On one hand, school officials may sometimes be secretive about facts concerning a child. Some may be defeatist about the value of educating the severely disabled. Because of old traditions, they may, without thinking, exclude parents from decision-making on the grounds that parents do not have professional expertise, are disinterested, or emotionally hampered by the pressures of rearing a handicapped child.

Parents, on the other hand, have often been guilty of unfairly expecting school professionals to know all and do all. Parents sometimes have resisted help out of fear or hopelessness, or have reacted to professional advice as if their integrity were threatened. Parents have often doubted their own ability and perceptions and have not been as involved as they could be. Add to this individual personalities, and sometimes opposite value systems, and you have enough complications to make on-going dialogue a definite impossibility.

In spite of all this, it is still necessary for schools and parents to work together for a child's benefit.

BELIEVE IN YOUR RIGHTS BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before you decide on the best method of handling a school problem, remind yourself of those things you have a right to expect as a parent:

1) The right to be present in discussing a very important concern - your child.
2) The right to function in a role of parent as you do for all your children.
3) The right to expect people to view your handicapped child as a child first with the same basic needs as any other child.
4) The right to ask for and receive clear explanations from people whose actions affect your family.
5) The right to air your concerns without criticism or intimidation.
6) The right to say "I don't know" or "I don't understand."

7) The right to refuse inappropriate requests or pressures without feeling guilty, selfish, or ignorant.
8) The right to "shop around" for the kind of professional advice you respect.
9) The right to hope and work for some improvement in your child's functioning.
10) The right to encouragement in the difficult job of rearing your child.

Once you've acknowledged your own right to have a respected role in educational decision-making, you are ready to confront the problem.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF DISAGREEMENT

The type of conflict you face will help determine your manner of dealing with it. Try to pinpoint the category in which your problem lies.

- Problems of Poor Communication. It's possible that misunderstanding or miscommunication is the cause of a parent-school problem, and there is no real conflict at all.

  For example, a parent knows that her son has been scheduled for speech therapy, and yet the child has not attended any sessions the first week of school. His name had been inadvertently omitted from the therapists list. This type of problem can be easily resolved by asking the appropriate person to run the correct message through the channels of communication one more time.

- Problems Requiring Structural Change. The way in which an activity is designed may cause a problem that can be resolved by an adjustment in its structure.

  For example, several parents and the school are in conflict over bus routes that make students from one neighborhood late for school each day. The best resolution of this kind of conflict is to have parents collect facts about the problem and present them to the director of transportation. The director can then make the changes necessary to redesign the bus routes.

- Problems Requiring Behavioral Change. The solution becomes difficult to reach if you must not only adjust an activity, but change behaviors that are heavily colored by the feelings of persons involved.

  In the case of the transportation issue above, problem-solving may also depend on how well each side deals with the varying individual reactions: 1) the willingness of the building principals to adjust schedules, 2) the willingness of drivers to juggle assignments, 3) the responsiveness of other parents to the idea of reworking their child's routine for the benefit of another, 4) the reaction of the transportation director to complaints, and 5) the feelings parents have about their children missing school time or being exhausted from long trips.

While it is appropriate and even necessary for individual feelings, fears, etc. to be expressed, the actual problem-solving process begins when the issue has been narrowed down to facts.

- Conflicting Basic Values. The fourth type of conflict is based on differing values and is often impossible to resolve. Here the basis for conflict is not fact or substance, but rather the feelings each side has about the values they hold.

  For example, there may be basic disagreement on whether there is value in offering education for the handicapped at all. If the director of transportation or the superintendent really believes that the amount of time spent in school is of little benefit to a handicapped child or society, he is not likely to agree with a parent who is pushing for as full a day of programming as possible for his child.

  Agreement in situations like this is not possible unless one or the other side changes the values it holds. The other alternatives are 1) forcing win-lose situations upon one side or the other, or 2) appealing to a higher authority to enforce a third-party judgment on the issue. In the case of an impasse on a special education issue, third-party judgments could come from the state education level, through a due process hearing, or by suit to a civil court.

FIVE METHODS FOR SOLVING A SCHOOL PROBLEM

As a parent, you will need to guage how much is to be gained by tackling a school problem.

1) Peaceful Coexistence. When conflicts are minor or temporary, making your own personal adjustments may be the best approach.

2) Compromise. If the stakes are higher, a compromise may be worked out. Parents should not automatically assume, however, that compromise is in all, or even most cases, the best or most reasonable solution for them or their child.

   Accepting a compromise can sometimes be a way of avoiding a confrontation with the real issues. And it can often be only a postponement of what will eventually need to be handled in another way later.

   A compromise may, on the other hand, be a perfectly valid way to buy time in the search for a solution or a legitimate way to avoid a destructive power struggle.

3) Direct Problem Solving. When the issue is of importance, and there is a reasonable change that positive communication can be achieved, direct problem-solving is the best process. It will mean 1) clearly defining the problem in unemotional terms, 2) collecting information to support your statement

of the problem, 3) expressing the need for change, and 4) working in some way with those in a position to make change. The following section will spell out this method in more detail.

4) Filing a Formal Complaint. Most states have a complaint investigation process designed to handle special education issues when local resolution is not possible. In this process, parents file a written complaint with the state department of education. A complaint investigation usually has timelines attached to it to insure that an answer will be forthcoming within a specified length of time. A complaint response can be appealed elsewhere if parents find it unacceptable. An appeal may or may not have timelines attached to it, and this may present a problem if speed is a factor in solving the issue.

5) Due Process Hearing. Parents may choose to resolve serious problems or questions that require an immediate answer by requesting a hearing before a hearing officer chosen in an impartial manner according to very specific state and federal regulations. Such third party judgments can and do effect positive change. The burden of expense rests with the local school, regardless of who requests it.

STEPS IN DIRECT PROBLEM-SOLVING

Step 1: Define the Problem. The first step in problem-solving is to pause and clearly identify what it is that you as a parent need to communicate to the school. Define the problem in terms of actions that are present or missing. Avoid burying the statement of the problem in language expressing how you feel about present practices.

For example, your 12-year-old- son Kent has been diagnosed as learning disabled. He has moved into junior high. You, as his parent, can define the apparent problem in terms of emotion or in terms of fact.

- *AS A STATEMENT OF EMOTION: "Nobody at his new school even cares. It seems like Kent's learning has really gone downhill."*
- *AS A STATEMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM: "Kent needs different teaching methods and more help in order to benefit from his classes."*
- *AS A STATEMENT OF PROBLEM IN A BROADER CONTEXT: "My son Kent who is LD, is now in junior high. The learning disabled students assigned to his building do not have resource rooms or specialists available to them."*

Step 2: Collect information to Support Your Statement of the Problem. Once you have defined the problem to yourself, you're ready to go through a process of researching it. Research can be as simple as making a list of facts to share about your child and his program, or as complicated as undertaking a thorough review of policy, existing programs, identified needs, and so on. The information you collect to support your statement could include:

- Information that points up the current problem in comparison to better past situations or future goals.

  You, as Kent's parent, assemble evidence of your son's past school performance, his present lower level of achievement, and a description of the too-high expectations his current junior high teachers have of him.

- Other people's opinions of the problem and their recommendations for changes.

  You ask Kent's past and current teachers and the LD specialists to discuss how Kent's program can be made more individualized. Parents of other students with special learning problems might also explain to you the similar needs of their children.

The laws that support your right to changed or improved services.

You may need to point out that Kent, other LD students at the junior high level, and in fact LD students of any age, are eligible to have their individualized needs for special education met, according to state, federal, and local regulations. You might also check to see which, if any, junior high buildings are served by LD specialists.

During the process of clarifying the issue and documenting it, you will have probably come up with suggestions for solving the problem that you will want to recommend. Conclude the research stage of problem-solving by identifying as many of the alternative solutions as possible. Identify those to which you would like the decision-makers to give priority consideration.

In dealing with Kent's problem, your list, in order of priority, may look like this:

1) *Design and put into place a complete LD program on the junior high level throughout the school district.*
2) *Develop an LD resource room program for Kent's building alone.*
3) *Find an LD teacher or specialist to design a study program that Kent's regular junior high teachers can carry out.*
4) *Find an already existing LD program and assign Kent to another school.*
5) *Have the school hire an aide for one-to-one tutoring.*
6) *Have the principal assign one building staff person, such as the guidance counselor, to be responsible for overseeing the teaching methodology of all of Kent's teachers.*
7) *Talk to each of Kent's teachers regarding adapting their teaching methodology to his needs.*

Step 3: Express the Need for Change. Decide with whom the problem should be discussed. It is usually best to start first with the person who deals most directly with the problem, rather than beginning at the top of the administrative ladder.

In the case of securing LD services for Kent, the level at which to begin will be determined by what your first priority suggestion will be. If your goal is to have all of Kent's classroom teachers modify their teaching methods and learning objectives, a meeting with the building principal would be a likely starting point. If, on the other hand, you are asking that all new services be designed and offered to all students like Kent, begin your discussions with the school district's director of special education.

If you find that there is a lack of responsiveness or an unwillingness to tackle the problem at the first level, you may then want to give it credibility.

State your position clearly with spoken and/or written words. Remember, too, that there are additional helps to getting the message across and keeping in control of yourself and the situation.

1) Maintain good body composure.
    a) Good eye contact. Look into the eyes of the person with whom you are speaking, but don't stare.
    b) A relaxed, but straight body posture.
    c) Even voice. Speak in your normally expressive voice, neither too loud, nor too whispery.
    d) Facial composure. Maintain composure and use expressions that agree with the words you are saying.

2) Manage tension physically and verbally.
    a) Take several deep breaths.
    b) Tense and relax some muscles, such as arms or legs.
    c) Stand up and stretch.
    d) Ask for a one or two minute break.
    e) Find someone in the room who looks relaxed and try to model your behavior after his.
    f) Shift your attention to some physical activity (have coffee, write notes, etc.).
    g) Momentarily shift the topic.
    h) Say something humorous.
    i) Say out loud that you do feel tense.
    j) Ask for the meeting to be re-scheculed if you feel sure you won't be a productive contributor.

3) If you missed an opportunity to say something:
    a) Write yourself a note to use later.
    b) Take a break and discuss the matter with a friend.
    c) Bring the incident up anyway during or after the conference.
    d) Write a letter to the conference coordinator immediately after the meeting.
    e) Plan to bring it up at another conference (and practice the statement you wanted to make before you go).

4) If someone has just made a provoking statement:

You might choose to:

1) Ignore it and continue.
2) Use silence and a direct gaze to underscore the comment's inappropriateness.
3) Label the comment for what it is in a calm voice (good luck!) and express your feelings about it.

5) If the meeting is repeatedly sidetracked:

Memorize a phrase stating simply and clearly what you would like to see happen and repeat it whenever necessary.

Step 4: Work to Help Make the Change. If you feel you have expertise, time, or energy to give toward the solution of the problem, by all means make the offer to do so. Don't feel or be made to feel, however, that because you have identified the problem, the burden rests on you to engineer a plan, find the money, and see the problem to its final resolution. School persons usually have a strong notion about their responsibilities as public providers of valuable services and should do in good faith whatever is in their power to do.

Often, however, a problem can arise at this point. Educators might be tempted to place back upon you, the parent, the responsibility for finding a solution. It can be a useful tactic for intimidation or shutting off an argument, or simply an expression of the enormity of the problem. "Well if you can find the money, I'll be glad to hire the teacher."

The best response to a statement like this is to indicate that your role is that of parent, and that the responsibility for managing the problems rest with them, the school, and that you will rely on their expertise.

The opposite response to an offer to help might be extreme reluctance on the part of the school to share its responsibilities with parents. Parents have often felt this hesitancy and, in fact, expect to not be included in planning, decision-making, or evaluating programs, even when it comes to programs for their own child. This has been the traditional "separation of professional and consumer" prevalent for decades, if not centuries, in American public education. "They're ours from 8 to 3, and yours again after that."

One of the most positive outcomes of the entire movement to create space for the parent in the handicapped child's educational process may well be the breaking down of the lines of education's rigid division of territory. In this instance, parents of handicapped children may have moved from the back of the line to the front as potential leaders in new and better home-school relationships and community involvement.

Each time you as a parent decide to openly deal with the schools on a mutual problem, you are opening doors for other parents who might otherwise still be doubtful about the value of "rocking the boat."

Appendix F

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PARENT GROUPS AND COALITIONS

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Suite 338, Boston, MA 02116

Coordinating Council for Handicapped Children, 407 South Dearborn,
Room 1070, Chicago, IL 60605

Southwestern Ohio Coalition for Handicapped Children, 3024 Burnet
Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45219

New Hampshire Coalition for Handicapped Citizens, Inc., Eagle
Center, 5th Floor, 110 North Main Street, Concord, NH 03301

Task Force on Education for the Handicapped, 812 East Jefferson
Boulevard, South Bend, IN 46617

Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights, 4701 Chicago
Avenue, S. Minneapolis, MN 55407

Team of Advocates for Special Kids, 8100 Garden Grove Boulevard,
Suite 12 - United Way Plaza, Garden Grove, CA 92641